

Cornerstones for Kids

# Workforce Planning Tool Kit: Gap-Closing Strategies

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**Submitted by:**



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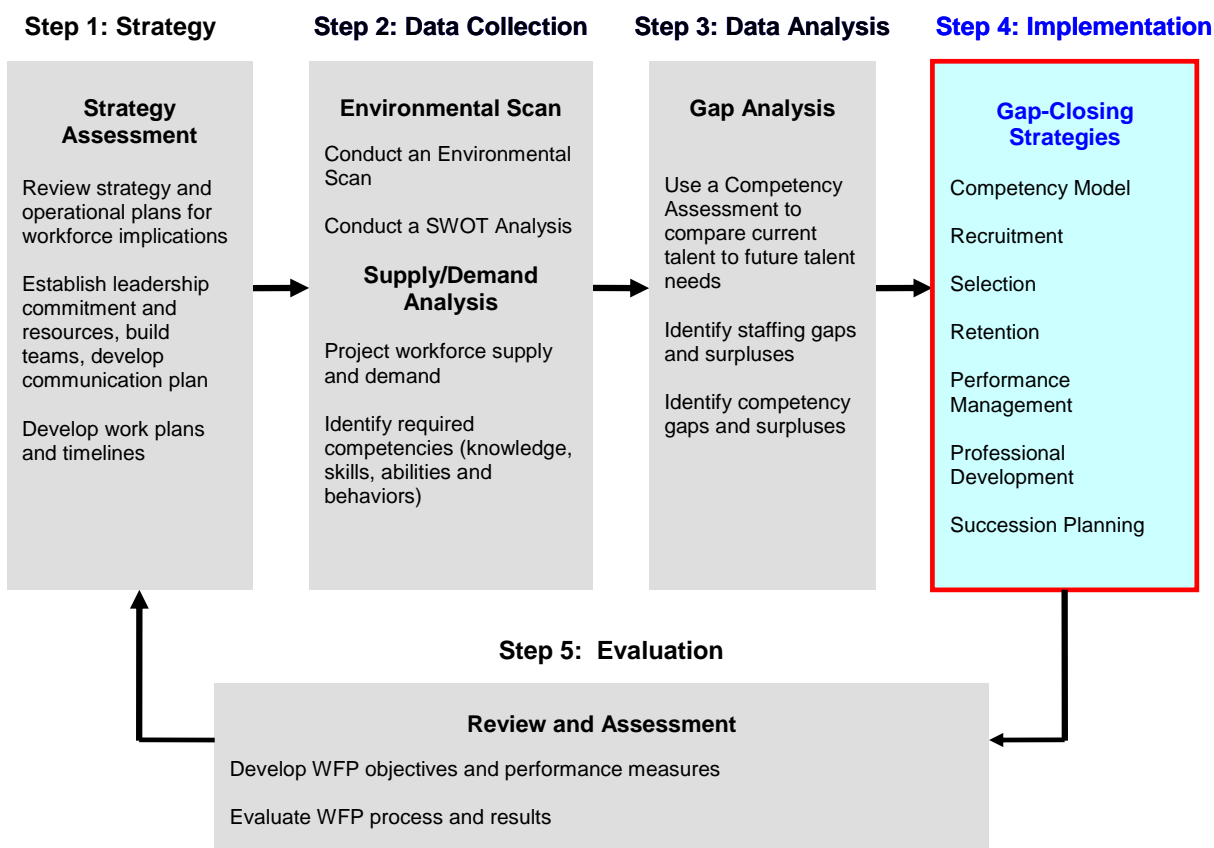
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# Introduction

**Figure 1: Workforce Planning Steps**



We designed this Tool Kit for public-sector and non-profit human services administrators and human resources professionals who want to take a comprehensive approach to addressing workforce issues. The information and guides in this Tool Kit can be used whether you employ an all public-sector and non-profit workforce, a contracted-out service delivery workforce, or a combination of private and public workforce. Similarly, this Tool Kit and the principles of the Workforce Planning model will work in agencies of all sizes – although you may have to modify slightly some of the concepts in a smaller organization.

Gap-closing strategies are designed to close workforce gaps to help your organization better achieve its mission and strategic objectives. Gap-closing strategies are comprehensive solutions to workforce challenges like:

- Difficulty recruiting and selecting applicants with the competencies critical to achieving your agency's mission.
- High turnover, which prevents you from developing a stable and competent workforce.
- Supervisors, middle managers, executives and others who are filling critical positions but who are already eligible for retirement; you need to develop a plan for replacing the knowledge loss when they leave.

For this Tool Kit, we assume that you've identified the workforce and competency gaps and/or surpluses in your agency, either by:

- Completing Steps 1 through 3 of the Workforce Planning process outlined above; or
- Otherwise gathering the necessary data and completing enough analysis to begin identifying your gap-closing strategies.

#### **Workforce Planning: How Step 4 Fits**

In Step 4, you'll use the workforce data and analysis you've conducted in Workforce Planning Steps 2 and 3 to identify the specific workforce strategies necessary to close your workforce "gaps." You'll plug these strategies into your implementation action plans outline in Step 1.

Throughout the Tool Kit, we use the terms *targeted classification/s* or *targeted job/s* to refer to the position/s that you've determined should be the focus of your gap-closing strategies.

The *Gap-Closing Tool Kit* will assist you in developing gap-closing strategies for your agency's workforce challenges in the areas of:

- Employee Recruitment
- Employee Selection
- Performance Management
- Professional Development
- Employee Retention
- Succession Planning

### **What's in the *Gap-Closing Tool Kit*?**

- A guide to developing gap-closing strategies with links to the appropriate tools.
- A description of an integrated Competency Model and how to use it as the foundation for your gap-closing strategies.
- A [Gap-Closing Strategies Matrix](#) which outlines which Tools will help you answer your Workforce Planning challenges.
- Hands-on worksheets, samples, guides and templates to help you construct your gap-closing strategies.

The first thing you'll need to do before using any of the Tools in this Tool Kit is to identify the [competencies](#) required for the targeted job/s in your agency. To do this, use the comprehensive steps in [Tool 1: Identifying Competencies for the Jobs in your Organization](#).

### A Guide to Developing Gap-Closing Strategies for your Agency

To Complete this Step:	Use these Tools:
Identify the competencies required for the targeted job/s in your agency.	<a href="#">Competency Library and Guidelines</a> <a href="#">Sample: Position Description Template and Guidelines</a> <a href="#">Meeting Facilitator Guide: Competency Identification Focus Group</a> <a href="#">Form: Competency Evaluation</a> <a href="#">Meeting Facilitator Guide: Competency Evaluation Focus Group</a>
Understand the human resources terms we use throughout this Tool Kit.	<a href="#">Human Resources – Defined</a>
Develop your gap-closing recruitment strategy.	<a href="#">Sample: Recruitment Strategy Planning Template</a>
Understand and develop a behavioral-based employee selection strategy.	<a href="#">Sample: Competency-Based Behavioral Interview Questions</a> <a href="#">Interview Evaluation Report</a>
Develop your competency-based performance management strategy.	<a href="#">Worksheet: Performance Assessment and Development Form</a> <a href="#">Evaluating Employee Competency Proficiency</a>
Identify resources for your professional development strategy.	<a href="#">Template: Professional Development Resource List</a>
Identify targeted solutions for improving employee retention in your agency.	<a href="#">Targeted Solutions to Turnover Matrix</a>
Develop your succession planning program.	<a href="#">Templates: Succession Planning</a>
Identify which Tools will help you address some typical gap-analysis outcomes.	<a href="#">Gap-Closing Strategies Matrix</a>



We've used this symbol to indicate the hands-on worksheets, samples and guides included throughout the Tool Kit.

## Introduction to Workforce Planning

Before walking through the process for developing an implementation and evaluation strategy for your workforce plan, it's constructive to establish a common foundation and understanding of Workforce Planning:

*Workforce Planning is the process of ensuring that an organization can achieve its mission by having the right people with the right skills in the right places at the right times.*

Operationally, Workforce Planning is a systematic process for identifying the human capital required to meet organizational goals and developing the strategies to meet these requirements.<sup>1</sup> Workforce Planning also includes the logical next step – identifying how to eliminate these talent gaps and develop the competencies needed for success.

This is particularly important in human services agencies where the introduction of new reforms, changing expectations, refocused program emphasis, new client populations, and the demand to become “outcome oriented” may require the workforce to have new and different skills and competencies.

Workforce Planning is more critical than ever today, to prepare agencies for the workforce crisis that is being created by profound demographic shifts. At the macro level, for example, there are more than 80 million baby boomers in the United States today, accounting for almost 28 percent of our nation's population. As these boomers begin to retire in large numbers, the entire nation will face a workforce crisis because there are only 40 million in the population to replace the baby boomers.

Moreover, as the nation's population and workforce increasingly diversify, agencies will need to adapt their cultures, management and human resources approaches to this diversity. The agencies that do this in a carefully planned way will succeed in attracting and retaining talent. Those that don't evolve face the very real risk of failing to achieve their mission, and their potential.

### **Baby Boomers and Public-Sector Workforce Planning**

The crisis of retiring “baby boomers” will hit government first because public sector workers are, on average, older than private sector workers. Plus, most public servants can retire earlier than their private sector colleagues. It is anticipated that over one million baby boomer human service workers will be eligible for retirement.<sup>1</sup> But the workforce challenge is not simply about the overall worker shortage. Many of the baby boomer retirees will be the public sector's most experienced and talented leaders. As these people leave the workforce, agencies will need to retain and transfer their knowledge. To succeed, public sector agencies must build their leadership pipelines now.

<sup>1</sup> CPS Human Resource Services. 2006. [Workforce Planning Overview](#). See also: CPS Human Resource Services. 2005. [Building the Leadership Pipeline in Local, State and Federal Government](#).

<sup>1</sup> National Academy of Public Administration. May 2000. *Building Successful Organizations: A Guide to Strategic Workforce Planning*. [www.napawash.org/publications.html](http://www.napawash.org/publications.html).

It's important to keep in mind that WFP is not a one-time event; it's about developing competencies to address workforce issues over time. Agencies that commit to the development of a workforce plan will gain a thorough understanding of their current workforce and will identify the competencies that will move the agency forward. Workforce planning puts the agency "one step ahead", resulting in informed staffing decisions that benefit the agency in both the short term and long term. More importantly, it helps recognize the most effective and efficient use of employees in creating a workforce that is and will continue to be flexible and responsive.





In all likelihood, you've determined that no single strategy will adequately address all of the staffing and competency gaps you've identified. The *Gap-Closing Strategies Matrix* identifies which tools will help you address some of the typical findings from a gap analysis.

### Gap-Closing Strategies Matrix

<b>WFP Gap-Analysis Shows:</b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 2: Recruitment</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 3: Selection</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 4: Performance Management</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 5: Professional Development</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 6: Retention</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 7: Succession Planning</a></u></b>
<b>Large percentage of employees don't have the right competencies</b>	Are we recruiting the right employees?	Are we selecting the right employees?	Are we setting clear performance expectations? Are we weeding out poor performers?	Are we offering the right development opportunities? Are we helping employees identify their developmental needs?		
<b>High turnover is causing us to replace too many employees</b>	Do people we recruit really understand our jobs?	Are we selecting the right employees?	Are we setting clear performance expectations? Are we providing appropriate feedback?	Do employees feel "equipped" to do the job? Are they developed for future promotions?	Have we analyzed the causes of high turnover?	
<b>Large percentage supervisors/managers eligible for retirement</b>	How do we recruit good supervisors and managers?	Does our selection process help us select/promote the right employees?		Are we developing employees for future promotions?		Do we have a succession planning program in place?
<b>Many employees not meeting performance standards</b>	Are we recruiting high-quality applicants?	Are we hiring employees who can do the job?	Are our objectives clear? Are they aligned with our strategic plan?	Do employees get the training and development they need?		
<b>New initiative will change the way the work is done</b>	Will we have to change the kind of people we recruit?	Will we have to change our selection process to hire a different kind of employee?	Will we have to develop new performance objectives? Will we measure outcomes differently?	Will employees need to develop new competencies? Will they need different training?		

<b>WFP Gap- Analysis Shows:</b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 2: Recruitment</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 3: Selection</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 4: Performance Management</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 5: Professional Development</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 6: Retention</a></u></b>	<b><u><a href="#">Tool 7: Succession Planning</a></u></b>
<b>Difficulty attracting qualified applicants</b>	Are our recruitment strategies effective? Are we the kind of organization people want to work for?			Do we have a reputation for not developing the people we hire?		
<b>Our agency lacks the diversity it needs</b>	Do we have effective outreach strategies?	Is our hiring process fair and free from bias?			Do we have trouble retaining a diverse workforce?	Do we consider diversity when doing succession planning?
<b>Frontline supervisors are technically competent, but lack the supervisory skills necessary to build teams, manage performance and support and develop staff.</b>	Are we recruiting applicants for supervisor jobs who have the competencies we really need?	Are we promoting employees with the critical supervisory competencies or just those with the best “technical skills?”	Are we identifying the right expectations for supervisors and holding them accountable in those areas?	Do we offer appropriate training and development for supervisors to enhance their abilities?		What should we be doing to help our experienced workers develop the competencies needed to step into supervisory roles?
<b>Workers are overwhelmed with paperwork, transporting, and other “busy work.”</b>	Should we be recruiting and hiring case aides and other support staff in order to utilize support staff more effectively?	What are the competencies needed for hiring the best support staff?				



## Human Resources – Defined

### Human Resources Management (HRM)

*The formal structure within an organization responsible for all the decisions, strategies, factors, principles, operations, practices, functions, activities and methods related to the management of people.<sup>2</sup>*

Although there may be some differences in terminology from one organization to another, HRM systems basically focus on the following Human Resources (HR) areas<sup>3</sup>:

- **Recruitment** - The first step in the process of matching job descriptions and applicant specifications with people. The process of surveying all sources of personnel, inside and outside the organization, to locate and attract the best possible candidates for new or vacated positions.
- **Selection** - The process of matching people and jobs. The decision-making process in hiring – it typically involves multiple interviews and interviewer ratings, and it may make use of performance tests and assessment centers.
- **Performance Management** – Daily, year-round, continuing appraisal, coaching and feedback that involves helping employees understand the nature and quality of their performance, identify what they need to do to improve, and motivate them to do it. Performance management employs strategies designed to foster employee personal responsibility, self-discipline and individual decision making, rather than traditional punishment, to maintain employee self-esteem and encourage loyalty and commitment.
- **Professional Development** - A continuing and deliberate organization-sponsored process aimed at assisting, encouraging and enabling professionals as individuals to improve their performance and potential – developing their knowledge, skills, abilities and values.
- **Retention** - The process of keeping employees within the organization by taking steps to help prevent unwanted turnover.
- **Succession Planning** - The process of identifying long-range needs and cultivating a supply of internal talent to meet those future needs. Succession planning is used to anticipate the future needs of the organization and assist in finding, assessing and developing the human capital necessary to the strategy of the organization.<sup>1</sup>
- **Recognition** - Intangible, non-monetary acknowledgement of outstanding performance in the form of praise, accolades, commendations, 'thank yous' and tributes; may be formal or informal.

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<sup>2</sup> The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM).

<sup>3</sup> William Re Tracey. 2004. *The Human Resources Glossary: the Complete Desk Reference for HR Executives, Managers and Practitioners*. Third Ed. Boca Raton: St. Lucie Press.

## Overview: The Integrated Competency Model

The tools in this Tool Kit are based on an [\*integrated competency-based human resources model\*](#). Although this phrase may sound intimidating – particularly to those who are not HR professionals – the concepts underlying the model are intuitive and straightforward. Nonetheless, it is important to have a basic understanding of what competencies are, how to integrate them into all of an agency’s human resources programs, procedures and processes, and why it’s important to do so.

This overview is designed to help you understand:

- What competencies are and why they are important.
- Why it is important to integrate the Competency Model throughout all of your HR systems.
- How the Competency Model can be used as the foundation for your gap-closing strategies.

### *What Are Competencies and Why Are They Important?*

The term **competencies** is widely used in both public and private sector organizations and has become part of the everyday jargon in the professional practice of both Human Resources and Staff Training. However, the term is sometimes used in very different ways.

- HR practitioners usually give the term a behavioral focus. Examples of competencies in this context are characteristics such as *Communication* and *Analytical Thinking*. The underlying notion is that the successful employee will possess the behavioral attributes associated with superior performance.
- Training practitioners often give the term a task or functional focus. Examples of competencies in this context would be, “able to conduct a strength-based interview,” or “able to complete a case assessment.” The underlying notion is that the successful trainee will be able to perform the critical elements of the job.

The following Questions and Answers help clarify what competencies and how they fit into the overall Workforce Planning process.

### **What are competencies?**

We define competencies as *the knowledge, skills, behaviors, personal attributes and other characteristics that are associated with or predictive of superior job performance*. Examples of competencies include *Decision Making, Influence, Stress Tolerance* and *Teamwork*.

<b>Decision Making/Problem Solving</b>
Breaks down problems into components and recognizes interrelationships; makes sound, well-informed, and objective decisions. Compares data, information, and input from a variety of sources to draw conclusions; takes action that is consistent with available facts, constraints, and probable consequences.
<b>Influence</b>
Uses appropriate interpersonal skills and techniques to gain acceptance for ideas or solutions. Uses influencing strategies to gain genuine agreements; Seeks to persuade rather than force solutions or impose decisions or regulations.
<b>Stress Tolerance</b>
Maintains effective performance under pressure; handling stress in a manner that is acceptable to others and to the organization.
<b>Teamwork (non-supervisory competency: supervisors use Team Leadership)</b>
Participates as an active and contributing member of a team to achieve team goals. Works cooperatively with other team members, involves others, shares information as appropriate, and shares credit for team accomplishments.

Research suggests that when supervisors describe the best employee they ever supervised, they seldom focus on that person's technical knowledge and skills, or their academic credentials and work history. They tend to describe behavioral characteristics – or competencies – such as being a team player, focusing on customer/client needs, and having great organizational skills. Similarly, employees tend to describe their best supervisors as those who build trust, give immediate feedback, and show concern for them as a person.

The ability to pinpoint the characteristics that differentiate the average worker from the exemplary worker is fundamental to a competency-based system.

### **Isn't having the right educational background and experience really important?**

Having specific technical knowledge, education and experience is important, but it is not what usually distinguishes between average and superior performance. Having the right academic training and technical skills are often the threshold requirements for the job, serving as minimum credentials to make it through the screening process.

However, those with the strongest technical skills – and even prior experience – are not necessarily the best performers. For example, an employee with the greatest knowledge of social work principles and the most years of experience will not be among the best workers unless they are also able to make good decisions, be a productive contributor to the team, and form constructive relationships with their clients.

## How do competencies tie into our gap-closing strategies?

The competencies you identify as being critical to successful performance in your targeted classification/s will serve as the foundation for your gap-closing strategies. You will use these competencies when you design your gap-closing strategies for all your HR processes, including employee selection, performance management and professional development.

For example, if you determine that *Communication* is a critical competency that your Child Welfare Caseworkers need to improve (a competency gap), you can:

- **Employee Selection:** Select new workers who are skilled in *Communication* by developing interview questions that will help you learn whether applicants possess this skill.
- **Performance Management:** Target *Communication* in caseworkers' performance management plans and identify actionable guideposts related to it in order to track improvement.
- **Professional Development:** Identify specific training and development resources related to *Communication* in caseworkers' performance management plans.

## Are the same competencies needed by all employees, irrespective of the kind of jobs they hold?

The specific competencies that are critical to successful performance in one type of job or job family may be quite different from those in another. *Influence*, *Initiative* and *Follow Up* are competencies often associated with success in sales jobs, while *Stress Tolerance*, *Decision Making* and *Planning and Organizing* may be more predictive of success in social work jobs.

The specific competencies associated with superior performance within a particular occupation may also differ from one organizational culture to another. Not surprisingly, the organization's mission, vision and values will very likely determine the definition of successful job performance. Organizations wishing to make a significant change in their strategic direction, goals and objectives will be more successful if they clearly articulate the competencies for the key jobs that are critical to making these changes.

## How many competencies should be identified for a given job classification?

A large number of competencies may be desirable in any given classification. However, it is important to avoid identifying too many competencies for a particular job. You should narrow your list for a given job classification to the eight to twelve competencies that distinguish the best performers from the rest. Using more competencies than this makes them meaningless – supervisors cannot provide appropriate feedback and employees cannot effectively focus on improving in too many areas at one time.

**Does the application of competencies to HRM systems and processes have any research or scientific basis?**

The study of competencies began in the early 1970's, resulting in hundreds of job studies over the years focused on identifying what differentiates strong performers from average performers.<sup>4</sup> The underlying premise is that having a better understanding of these differentiators will allow organizations to hire better employees, and to better evaluate and develop them.

*Integrating the Competency Model throughout your HRM System*

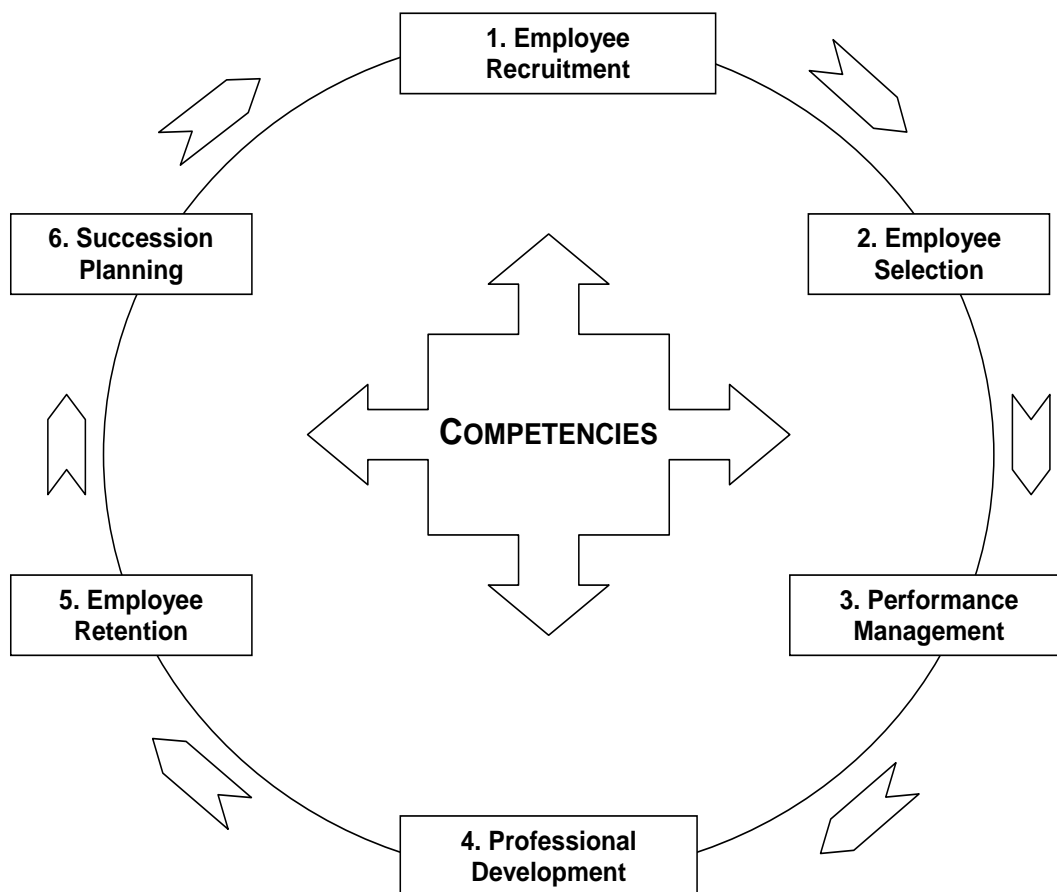
To be most effective, your organization should integrate the same competencies identified for a specific classification throughout all aspects of the HR program, including recruitment and selection, performance management, and professional development.

For example, once you've identified the competencies most critical to job performance in your targeted classification, you should design the selection process to recruit and hire people who possess those competencies. Once hired, employees should be given performance feedback on how well they demonstrate those competencies, and their professional development plans should focus on further improvement in the critical competency areas.

Figure 2 below illustrates how a classification's competencies are integrated into an organization's entire Human Resources Management system. In this example, *Organizational Ability* is the critical competency, and the classification is Child Welfare Caseworker.

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<sup>4</sup> Zwell, Michael. 2000. *Creating a Culture of Competence*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

**Figure 2: Integrated Competency Model**

In implementing your Competency Model, consistency is critical. To use one set of competencies for the selection process and another for performance management invites confusion and dilutes the effectiveness of the Competency Model.

In addition, your Competency Model will be most effective when everyone in your targeted classification understands which competencies the agency considers critical to successful job performance. When consistently used, the language of the Competency Model will become interwoven into the fabric of the organization, and integrated into employee performance.



In Table 1 below, we grouped the HR processes into three major phases:

- Recruitment and Selection
- Performance Management
- Professional Development

The table below illustrates an example of a Competency Model for a Child Welfare Caseworker. It identifies the twelve competencies that are critical to successful performance in the job. The table shows during which HR phase you would focus on each competency. In other words, during the Performance Management phase, it's critical to assess Caseworkers on:

- *Collaboration*
- *Communication*
- *Cultural Competence*
- *Planning and Organizing*
- *Teamwork*

**Table 1: Competency Focus for HR Processes – Child Welfare Caseworker**

Competencies for Child Welfare Caseworkers	Recruitment and Selection(1)	Performance Management	Professional Development
<i>Adaptability</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Building Trust</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Collaboration</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Communication</i>	Writing sample and overall interview	Required	Optional
<i>Continuous Learning and Professional Development</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Cultural Competence</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Customer/Client Focus</i>		Optional	Optional
<i>Decision Making/Problem Solving</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Planning and Organizing</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Stress Tolerance</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Teamwork</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill</i>	Resume clarification and overall interview	Optional	Optional
(1) Behavioral interview questions will be asked in the seven competency areas denoted with an "x". The <i>Communication</i> competency will be scored based on answers to the other questions and on the scoring of the written exercise administered by the agency. The <i>Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills</i> competency will be scored based on answers to the other behavioral questions, the applicant's education and experience, and answers to direct questions asked about experience.			

Although the twelve competencies listed are important for all employees in the classification, it isn't practical for the organization to focus on all of the competencies at the same time, nor is it practical for every employee to focus on all of the competencies at the same time.

In some organizations it is most practical to introduce the Competency Model into all of the agency's HR systems simultaneously. In others, it will be better to phase the Competency Model into HR systems on a gradual basis. Although there are real benefits to introducing a fully integrated system all at once, unless your organization has the capacity to do it well, it is better to phase it in gradually.

When phasing in the Competency Model, we find it best to introduce it into the selection process first. Typically there is less resistance to changing a selection process than a performance management process because it directly affects fewer employees. Most agencies will also find it best to introduce the Competency Model into the performance management process at the beginning of a performance evaluation cycle. We don't recommend waiting longer than a performance management cycle to introduce the Competency Model into this process. This will prevent you from selecting employees under one set of competencies and evaluating them under another.

### *Integrating a Competency Model throughout your Organization*

Your integrated competency-based HR model should be used throughout the organization. Doing so simplifies the administration of HR services and increases everyone's perception of the importance of the competency-based approach. Integrating the model throughout the organization has a number of advantages:

- To focus the Competency Model only on one or two classifications will diminish the potential success that can be achieved by introducing the integrated Competency Model throughout the agency.
- All employees understand which competencies they need for the successful performance of their current jobs, and also for higher-level jobs to which they might aspire.
- You can use a Competency Model as an important tool for shaping an organizational culture around the competencies needed for the agency's overall success. For example, if you've determined that *Customer Service* is a competency that is central to your agency's success, by integrating the competency throughout your agency's HR processes, the organizational culture will change to reflect the importance of *Customer Service*.

#### ➤ Tip:

Before introducing a competency-based system into your HR processes, begin with the end in mind. Think through what you want to accomplish, the overall implementation strategy, and how the Competency Model will be introduced into other HR systems in the future. Beginning with the end in mind will help make the transition to a fully integrated Competency Model much smoother.

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## Tool 1 – Identifying Competencies for the Jobs in your Organization

This Tool will help you identify the eight to twelve competencies that are predictive of or associated with superior job performance in your target classification/s. We use the term [Competency Model](#) to refer to this group of competencies. These competencies then become the foundation for any of the HRM processes you choose to implement.

The way an agency develops its Competency Model can be relatively simple and straightforward, or can involve complex methodologies that are both expensive and time-consuming. There is no one correct process that is suitable for all situations. Virtually all approaches, however, involve identifying the behaviors, traits and characteristics of superior performers that differentiate them from the average performers.

This Tool includes:

- A step-by-step process for identifying the critical competencies for your target classification/s. The process is relatively easy to administer and does not require a large expenditure of time or other resources.
- Tips and “short cuts” you can use to make the process less intensive but that won’t compromise the integrity of the end result.

### Building Your Competency Model

The steps to building a Competency Model include:

- Step 1: Understand the Competency Library.
- Step 2: Develop position description/s for your targeted classification/s.
- Step 3: Identify the competencies that the superior performers in the classification possess.
- Step 4: Validate the competencies identified in Step 3.
- Step 5: Reconcile the validation results with those obtained in Step 3.
- Step 6: Review and finalize the results of Step 5 with the executive leadership team.

#### Step 1: Understand the Competency Library

In this step, your agency’s Human Resources Manager and other key HR staff will become familiar with the Competency Model and the [Competency Library](#).

The [Competency Library](#) on the next four pages includes the full range of competencies one would find important for a wide range of jobs within a human services agency. It includes 34 competencies that might be appropriate for a Competency Model for a specific classification or family of classifications. Most of them describe characteristics that are desirable in any job. However, the purpose of constructing your Competency Model is to identify the set of **critical competencies** that distinguish superior performance in your target classification/s.



## Competency Library Guidelines

Keep these guidelines in mind as you familiarize yourself with the Competency Library:

- **Overlapping Competencies:** Although the competency definitions are intended to describe a discrete set of behaviors, traits and characteristics, there is some natural overlap. Where there is significant overlap between two competencies, there is a notation recommending that both not be used in the same Competency Model. *Adaptability* and *Facilitating Change* are two overlapping competencies – the underlying behaviors, traits and characteristics are so similar that using them both in the same Competency Model would not be appropriate. For example, in order to excel in the area of helping others accept change, one must be adaptable himself or herself.
- **Changing Competency Definitions:** The definitions used in the Competency Library are broad enough to be used in any human services work setting. You may wish to change the definitions to better fit the language and culture of your organization. However, you should keep the definitions broad enough to apply to any jobs within the organization for which they will be used. On the other hand, they should be narrow enough to not significantly overlap with other competency definitions.
- **Adding Competencies to the Library:** As you begin to identify the Competency Model/s for your organization, you may find that your targeted job/s requires competencies not included in the Library. Typically, some minor rewording of the definition of a competency will address the concern. If not, you can develop new competency titles and definitions.
- **Competencies and Organizational Levels:** Some of these competencies may be relevant for jobs at any organizational level, while others are generally appropriate only within a specific organizational level, such as frontline supervision, managers, or executives.



## Competency Library

### Action Oriented

Consistently maintains high levels of activity or productivity; sustains long working hours when necessary, works with vigor, effectiveness and determination over a sustained period.

### Adaptability (Do not use with Facilitating Change.)

Adapts well to changes in assignments and priorities; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; approaches change positively and adjusts behaviors accordingly.

### Applied Learning (Do not use with Continuous Learning and Professional Development.)

Able to learn and properly apply new job-related information in a timely manner. Has the ability to absorb and comprehend job-related information from formal training and other formal and informal learning experiences.

### Building Trust

Interact with others in a way that gives them confidence in one's motives and representations and those of the organization. Is seen as direct and truthful; keeps confidences, promises, and commitments.

### Coaching

Providing timely guidance and feedback to help others strengthen knowledge/skills areas needed to accomplish a task or solve a problem.

### Collaboration

Builds constructive working relationships with clients/customers, other work units, community organizations and others to meet mutual goals and objectives. Behaves professionally and supportively when working with individuals from a variety of ethnic, social and educational backgrounds.

### Communication

Clearly conveys and receives information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message, and invites response and feedback. Keeps others informed as appropriate. Demonstrates good written, oral, and listening skills

### Conflict Management

Uses appropriate interpersonal styles and techniques to reduce tension and/or conflict between two or more people; able to size up situations quickly; able to identify common interests; facilitates resolution.

### Continuous Learning and Professional Development (Do not use with Applied Learning)

Is committed to developing professionally, attends professional conferences, focuses on best practices, values cutting-edge practices and approaches; takes advantage of a variety of learning activities, introduces newly gained knowledge and skills on the job.

### Cultural Competence

Cultivates opportunities through diverse people; respects and relates well to people from varied backgrounds, understands diverse worldviews, and is sensitive to group differences; sees diversity as an opportunity, challenges bias and intolerance.

### Customer/Client Focus

Makes customers/clients and their needs a primary focus of one's actions; shows interest in and understanding of the needs and expectations of internal and external customers (including direct reports); gains customer trust and respect; meets or exceeds customer expectations

**Decision Making/Problem Solving**

Breaks down problems into components and recognizes interrelationships; makes sound, well-informed, and objective decisions. Compares data, information, and input from a variety of sources to draw conclusions; takes action that is consistent with available facts, constraints, and probable consequences.

**Delegating Responsibility**

Comfortably delegates responsibilities, tasks, and decisions; appropriately trusts others to perform; provides support without removing responsibility.

**Developing Others**

**(non-supervisory relationship; supervisors use Guiding and Developing Staff)**

Helps plan and supports the development of individuals' skills and abilities so that they can fulfill current or future job/role responsibilities more effectively.

**Facilitating Change (Do not use with Adaptability.)**

Facilitates the implementation and acceptance of change within the workplace; encourages others to seek opportunities for different and innovative approaches to addressing problems and opportunities.

**Follow-up**

Monitors the work of direct reports to insure quality standards and thoroughness; considers the knowledge, experience, and skill of staff members when determining extent of review.

**Formal Presentation Skills**

Effectively presents ideas, information and materials to individuals and groups. Effectively prepares and provides structured delivery; facilitates workshops or meetings in a structured manner, can facilitate and manage group process.

**Guiding and Developing Staff (supervisory competency: non-supervisors use Developing Others)**

Focuses on guiding others in accomplishing work objectives; rewards and recognizes others, both formally and informally, in ways that motivate them. Sets high performance expectations for team members; sets clear performance expectations and objectives; holds others accountable for achieving results. Successfully finds resources, training, tools, etc. to support staff needs. Works with staff to create developmental opportunities to expand knowledge and skill level; provides effective feedback and guidance for career development.

**Influence**

Uses appropriate interpersonal skills and techniques to gain acceptance for ideas or solutions. Uses influencing strategies to gain genuine agreements; seeks to persuade rather than force solutions or impose decisions or regulations.

**Initiative**

Takes action without being asked or required to; achieves goals beyond job requirements; being proactive; taking prompt action to accomplish objectives.

**Innovation**

Uses creativity and imagination to develop new insights into situations and applies new solutions to problems. Comes up with new and unique ideas.

**Managing Work (supervisory competency: non-supervisors use Planning and Organizing)**

Shows ability to plan, schedule, direct work of self and others; balances task requirements and individual abilities; organizes materials to accomplish tasks; sets challenging yet achievable goals for self and others.

**Negotiation**

Effectively exploring alternatives and positions to reach agreements and solutions that gain the support and acceptance of all parties.

**Planning and Organizing (non-supervisory competency: supervisors use Managing Work)**

Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resources requirements; determines necessary sequence of activities needed to achieve goals.

**Quality Orientation**

Monitors and checks work to meet quality standards; demonstrates a high level of care and thoroughness; checks work to ensure completeness and accuracy.

**Risk Taking**

Seeks opportunities and calculates risks to accomplish results that can lead to substantial benefit knowing the real possibility of significant negative consequences.

**Safety Awareness**

Being aware of conditions and circumstances that affect one's own safety or the safety of direct reports.

**Strategic Focus**

Understands how an organization must change in light of internal and external trends and influences; keeps the big, long range picture in mind; builds a shared long-range organizational vision with others. Committed to course of action to achieve long-range goals and influences others to translate vision into action.

**Stress Tolerance**

Maintains effective performance under pressure; handling stress in a manner that is acceptable to others and to the organization.

**Team Leadership (supervisory competency: non-supervisors use Teamwork)**

Communicates a vision and inspires motivation; engages with others (direct-reports and peers) in team process to solve problems; works to find a win/win resolution of differences; is aware of how management style impacts staff productivity and development; modifies leadership style to meet situational requirements; helps team stay focused on major goals while managing within a context of multiple directives.

**Teamwork (non-supervisory competency: supervisors use Team Leadership)**

Participates as an active and contributing member of a team to achieve team goals. Works cooperatively with other team members, involves others, shares information as appropriate, and shares credit for team accomplishments.

**Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills**

Possesses, acquires, and maintains the technical/professional expertise required to do the job effectively and to create client/customer solutions. Technical/professional expertise is demonstrated through problem solving, applying professional judgment, and competent performance.

**Visionary Leadership**

Keeps the organization's mission, vision, and values at the forefront of employee decision making and actions; ensures alignment of organization's strategic plan and agency practices with vision, mission and values.

**Work Standards**

Sets high standards and well-defined, realistic goals for one's self; displays a high level of effort and commitment towards completing assignments in a timely manner; works with minimal supervisor; is motivated to achieve.





## Appropriate Competencies – Employees, Supervisors and Managers/Executives

Competencies	Frontline Employees	Supervisors	Managers/ Executives
Action Oriented	X	X	X
Adaptability	X	X	
Applied Learning	X	X	
Building Trust	X	X	X
Coaching	X	X	X
Collaboration	X	X	X
Communication	X	X	X
Conflict Management	X	X	X
Continuous Learning and Professional Development	X	X	X
Cultural Competence	X	X	X
Customer/Client Focus	X	X	X
Decision Making/Problem Solving	X	X	X
Delegating Responsibility		X	X
Develop Others	X		
Facilitating Change	X	X	X
Follow-up		X	X
Formal Presentation Skills	X	X	X
Guiding and Developing Staff		X	X
Influence	X	X	X
Initiative	X	X	X
Innovation	X	X	X
Managing Work (supervisory competency: non-supervisors use Planning and Organizing)		X	X
Negotiation	X	X	X
Planning and Organizing (supervisory competency: non-supervisors use Planning and Organizing)	X		
Quality Orientation	X	X	
Risk Taking	X	X	X
Safety Awareness	X	X	X
Strategic Focus			X
Stress Tolerance	X	X	X
Team Leadership		X	X
Teamwork	X		
Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill	X	X	X
Visionary Leadership		X	X
Work Standards	X		



The table on the preceding page identifies the competencies that are typically appropriate within three organizational levels – Frontline Employees, Supervisors and Managers/Executives. Organizational structure may be very different across agencies, as will the way agencies define supervisory, managerial and executive jobs. Therefore, these designations should be considered as guidelines only.

For any given job classification, you should narrow your list of competencies to the eight to twelve that distinguish the best performers from the rest in the classification. Using more than this makes them meaningless – supervisors cannot provide appropriate feedback and employees cannot effectively focus on improving in too many areas at one time.

## **Step 2: Analyze and Develop Position Description/s**

In this step, you'll develop and/or update the position description/s for your targeted classification/s. Having complete, accurate and up-to-date descriptions for your targeted job/s provides a solid foundation for building your Competency Model.

- To develop descriptions, form a workgroup with Human Resources staff and others in the agency most knowledgeable about the job, its goals and the functions that must be performed.
- You may already have a format for creating job descriptions. (These forms are often called “class specifications,” “job specifications,” “position descriptions” or something similar.) The [Key Components and Sample Position Description Template](#) on the next four pages support a Competency Model, and are consequently more thorough than many. Even if your agency has a standard position description form, we recommend that you think through and discuss the information in the sample and adapt it to supplement your current process.
- Once you've completed a draft of the position description, the workgroup should carefully review the [Competency Library](#) and prepare a list of all of the competencies that could reasonably apply to the position. This broad list could include 20 or more of the competencies from the Library.
- The position description and the broad list of competencies will serve as the starting point for identifying the critical competencies in Step 3.



## Key Components for an Effective Job Description<sup>5</sup>

**Job Purpose:** This is a one sentence description of the overall purpose/mission of the job. It provides the rationale for why the job exists and how it contributes to the agency. If well done, it can reinforce for employees the critical role the position plays in the organization's success.

**Goals and Objectives:** These should be somewhat broad and general, but also indicate what incumbents should be accomplishing. This section provides key criteria for setting performance objectives and may include several bullet points.

**Reporting Relationships:** Includes the title of the position to which the incumbent reports, and also includes the titles of jobs reporting to it.

**Duties and Responsibilities:** Lists the duties and responsibilities of the position written as simply, yet completely, as possible. Usually, agencies include the caveat that the list of duties is not meant to be exhaustive, to minimize challenges from employees who resist performing duties that are not listed.

**Key Technical Skills and Knowledge:** Lists the important technical and professional skills and knowledge required to do the job well. This list may be an important source of information for the selection process and the professional development process.

**Key Success Factors:** Although somewhat related to Duties and Responsibilities and Key Technical Skills and Knowledge, these are the few key factors that relate to success on the job. They are the brief descriptions of the key behaviors and abilities that are critical to achieving the position's mission and goals.

**Performance Measures:** Lists the measures by which the position incumbents are held accountable, and are indicators of how well the job is being performed. In very general terms, these are how the goals and objectives of the position can be measured.

**Competency Model:** Includes the competencies identified for the position that differentiate superior performance. (You can incorporate these into the position description once you've determined what these are.)

**Job Fit:** The factors within the job that certain employees may find particularly satisfying or dissatisfying. These might include things like heavy volume of paperwork, travel into dangerous neighborhoods, and opportunity to work with all kinds of people.

**Career Pathways:** The classifications that might be next career opportunities for employees in this classification.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from Zwell, Michael. 2000. *Creating a Culture of Competence*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.



## Sample Position Description Template

<b>Effective Date:</b>	
<b>Job Title:</b>	
<b>Job Classification:</b>	
<b>Salary:</b>	
<b>Job Purpose:</b> One-sentence description of the overall purpose/mission of the job; the rationale for why the job exists and how it contributes to the agency.	
<b>Goals and Objectives:</b> These should be somewhat broad and general, but also indicate what incumbents should be accomplishing. This section provides key criteria for setting performance objectives and may include several bullet points.	
<b>Reporting Relationships:</b> Include the title of the position to which the incumbent reports, and also the titles of jobs reporting to it.	
Title of position to whom this job reports:	These positions report to this job:

**Duties and Responsibilities:** List the duties and responsibilities of the position as simply, yet completely, as possible.

**Key Technical Skills and Knowledge:** List the important technical and professional skills and knowledge required to do the job well.

**Key Success Factors:** List the few key factors that relate to success on the job in the format of brief descriptions of the key behaviors and abilities that are critical to achieving the position's mission and goals.

**Performance Measures:** List the measures by which the position incumbents are held accountable. These are indicators of how well the job is being performed.

**Competency Model:** Include the competencies identified for the position that differentiate superior performance.

**Job Fit:** The factors within the job that certain employees may find particularly satisfying or dissatisfying. Examples include heavy volume of paperwork, travel into dangerous neighborhoods, opportunities to work with all kinds of people.

**Career Pathways:** Identify the classification/s that might be next career opportunities for employees in this classification.

### Step 3: Identify Competencies

In this step, you'll use focus groups to identify and rank the competencies that the superior performers in your targeted classification possess.

- Identify facilitators to set up and run focus group meetings.
- The facilitators identify Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who will participate in the focus groups. The SMEs are typically exemplary employees in the target classification, exemplary frontline supervisors, and mid-level managers over the target classification.
- Use the [Focus Group Meeting Facilitator Guide](#) on the next four pages to run the meetings and record the results.

#### ➤ Tip:

##### Assembling your Focus Groups

- Have separate focus groups for the employees and the supervisors/managers to foster an environment of open discussion.
- Make the focus groups as diverse as possible.
- In large organizations, have three or four focus groups for each classification (or classification family).
- Have two facilitators for each focus group – one to lead the discussion and one to observe and take notes.
- Limit the size of each focus group to eight to twelve participants.
- Schedule at least three hours for each focus group meeting.



<b>What characteristics distinguish the excellent from the average performers?</b>
<b>Why have people failed in the job?</b>
<b>Other observations about the job?</b>

**Part 2 – Identify and Rank Competencies:** Hand out to participants the list of competencies and definitions. Explain that the objective is to identify from the broad list the ten competencies most essential for successful job performance.

Use one of the methods below to help the focus group reach consensus on the ten competencies.



## Method 1

- Lead a discussion by asking participants to identify which competencies should be included in the list.
- After the group identifies ten competencies, ask participants if there are any competencies missing from the list of ten.
- Once the list is complete, it will probably include more than ten competencies. Lead a discussion about which competency/s to eliminate from the list. Sometimes it is helpful to start by getting agreement on the competencies that are most important.
- Once the list has been narrowed to ten, help the group rank order the ten in order of importance, with 1 being the highest, or most important, competency.

## Method 2

- Ask participants to individually rank on their competency list the top ten in order of importance, with 1 being the highest, or most important, competency.
- Once completed, the group can break while facilitators tabulate the scores.
- In order for the scoring-method to work correctly, convert the rankings to scores, as follows:

Ranking	Score
1	10
2	9
3	8
4	7
5	6
6	5
7	4
8	3
9	2
10	1

### ➤ Tip:

Using Method 1 to rank the competencies may require more time, but it should result in more in-depth discussions.

- Use the [Competency Ranking Template](#) to tabulate the scores. The [Sample Competency Ranking Template](#) provides an example of a completed template showing the competency scores of exemplary employees as assigned by supervisors.
- After the break, share the results with the group. Discuss the results and make any consensus adjustments to the scoring.



## Example – Completed Competency Ranking Template

Classification: CASE WORKER

Employee	Scores Assigned by Subject Matter Experts (SMEs)															Total Score	Average	Rank
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O			
Competency Titles																		
Communication	7	9	9		7	3	9	3	7							54	6	1
Action Oriented		10	7	10	10	10	6									53	5.9	2
Decision Making/Problem Solving	9	5		1	8		7	8	9							47	5.2	3
Collaboration	6	7	10		3		5	4	8							43	4.8	4
Planning and Organizing	10	8	5	9			3	1	6							42	4.7	5
Stress Tolerance	4	6		8	6			10	5							39	4.3	6
Customer/Client Focus	5				9	9	10	5								38	4.2	7
Building Trust	8		8		2			9								27	3.0	8
Teamwork		4		6	1	8	1	2	1							23	2.6	9
Continuous Learning and Professional Development					4		8		10							22	2.4	10
Conflict Management	1	1				6		6	3							17	1.9	
Safety Awareness	2	2	4		5	2										15	1.7	
Initiative				4			4		4							12	1.3	
Work Standards	3					1		7								11	1.2	
Innovation		3				7										10	1.1	
Quality Orientation			3			5	2									10	1.1	
Facilitating Change				7					2							9	1.0	
Risk Taking				3		4										7	0.8	
Formal Presentation Skills			6													6	0.7	
Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills				5												5	0.6	
Cultural Competence				2												2	0.2	
Influence			2													2	0.2	
Negotiation			1													1	0.1	
Adaptability																0	0	
Applied Learning																0	0	
Coaching																0	0	
Developing Others																0	0	



## Step 4: Validate Competencies

In this step, you'll validate the list of competencies and rankings you obtained in your focus group meetings.

- Schedule a second focus group meeting/s with the frontline supervisors who participated in the initial meeting/s. The purpose of this meeting is to have the supervisors confidentially and anonymously evaluate two of their employees on the full list of competencies presented during the first meeting. You may also want to involve frontline supervisors who were not participants in the initial focus groups. The more input you receive, the better.
- Prepare an evaluation form using the [Competency Evaluation Form](#) on the next two pages by inserting the competencies you identified in Step 3
- Use the [Supervisor Focus Group – Meeting Facilitator Guide](#) to run the meetings and record the results.

### ➤ Tip:

If your organization has the ability to identify the exemplary performers in the target classification, you may want to include their supervisors in the second series of focus groups rather than the supervisors who participated in the first round of focus group meetings. There are two advantages to this approach:

1. Involving a totally different group of supervisors adds a new perspective and gets them actively involved in the process.
2. Some of the first round supervisors may not have experience supervising an exemplary employee.



## Competency Evaluation Form

What is your job title? \_\_\_\_\_

Who are you evaluating?  
Check one:

☐ The best employee  
I ever supervised.

☐ An average employee  
I currently supervise.

For each of the competencies listed, please carefully read the definition, then using the 1 to 5 scale as defined below, please evaluate the employee based on their proficiency in each competency by checking the box in the appropriate column.

Competency and Competency Definition	No Evidence of Proficiency	Marginally Proficient	Proficient	Exceeds Proficiency Expectations	Greatly Exceeds Proficiency Expectations
	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Competency and Competency Definition	No Evidence of Proficiency	Marginally Proficient	Proficient	Exceeds Proficiency Expectations	Greatly Exceeds Proficiency Expectations
	1	2	3	4	5
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Supervisor Focus Group – Meeting Facilitator Guide

<b>Meeting Objective:</b>	Validate the competencies and competency rankings for the targeted job identified by the first focus group meeting/s.
<b>Targeted Job:</b>	
<b>Meeting time, Location:</b>	
<b>Participants:</b>	
<b>Meeting Materials:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Two copies of the Competency Evaluation Form for each participant – preferably with half of them printed on colored paper</li><li>▪ Laptop and electronic forms to record data if available</li></ul>

1. Explain to participants that they will complete two confidential and anonymous evaluations – one for the most exemplary employee they ever supervised and a second for an average (but specific) employee.
2. Hand out one copy of the [Competency Evaluation Form](#) to each supervisor and ask them to focus on the best employee they ever supervised. It is important to focus on a specific employee rather than an abstract idea of an ideal employee – you can ask participants to write the initials of their exemplary employee at the top of the form to reinforce that they focus on that individual.
3. Review with participants the competency definitions to ensure that they are freshly in mind when completing the evaluations.
4. Have the supervisors complete the evaluation of the exemplary employee; collect the completed evaluations; hand out a second copy of the [Competency Evaluation Form](#).
5. Ask the supervisors to focus on one specific average employee they currently supervise. Again, you may want to ask the supervisors to write the initials of the specific employee at the top of the form. Ask the supervisors to complete the evaluation of the specific average employee.
6. Collect the completed evaluations.
7. Prior to concluding the meeting, ask the participants if they have any overall observations or thoughts to share with the group; answer any questions.
8. Tabulate the results from the focus group evaluations using the [Competency Ranking Template](#). Complete one template for the exemplary employees and another for the average employees.

### ➤ Tip:

It is crucial that you don't mistake the Competency Evaluation Forms of the exemplary employees for those for the average employees. To avoid this, we recommend printing the forms on different color paper or otherwise coding them before you hand them out to participants.





9. Compare the average scores of the exemplary employees to the average employees for each competency:
- Add the data you collected in the *Competency Ranking Templates* to the *Competency Comparison Template* below.
  - The competencies showing the greatest score differences are those that best differentiate the superior employees from the rest.

## Competency Comparison Template

[illegible]

The table on the next page shows an example of a completed a validation analysis. In this example, *Customer/Client Focus* was the greatest differentiator, *Decision Making/Problem Solving* the second greatest, etc.

### Example – Completed Competency Validation Results

Competency Titles:	Average Rating		Difference	Rank
	Average Employee	Exemplary Employee		
Customer/Client Focus	2.9	4.9	2	1
Decision Making/Problem Solving	2.9	4.8	1.9	2
Adaptability	3	4.8	1.8	3
Cultural Competence	3.1	4.8	1.7	4
Planning and Organizing	3	4.7	1.7	4
Collaboration	3.1	4.7	1.6	6
Teamwork	3.3	4.9	1.6	6
Stress Tolerance	3.3	4.8	1.5	8
Building Trust	3.5	4.9	1.4	9
Communication	3.3	4.7	1.4	9
Continuous Learning and Professional Development	3.1	4.5	1.4	9
Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill	3.4	4.7	1.3	12
Action Oriented	3.6	4.5	0.9	13
Influence	3.7	4.6	0.9	13
Work Standards	4.1	4.8	0.7	15
Conflict Management	3.9	4.5	0.6	16
Initiative	3.9	4.5	0.6	16
Negotiation	3.9	4.5	0.6	16
Quality Orientation	3.9	4.5	0.6	16
Developing Others	4	4.5	0.5	20
Safety Awareness	4.1	4.4	0.3	21

## Step 5: Reconcile Competency Results

In this step, you'll reconcile the results you obtained from your two sets of focus group meetings.

- Compare the results you obtained in Steps 3 and 4. Although it will be unlikely that the competencies will all be ranked in exactly the same order, they should be generally similar. Most of the competencies included in the top ten from Step 3 should be in the top ten or twelve from Step 4.
- If they are not, convene a focus group of the supervisors and managers who participated in Step 3.
- Have the focus group review the results from Steps 3 and 4 and come to consensus on which competencies should be included in the Competency Model. The final list will be your Competency Model for the targeted job/s. Your model includes those ***differentiating competencies*** that most differentiate exemplary performance from average performance.
- Although it is not necessary at this point to agree on the exact ranking of the competencies, agreement on the general order is useful – it may help your agency determine its priorities when integrating the Competency Model into its HR processes.

## Step 6: Executive Review and Finalization

In this step, you'll review the competencies for your targeted job/s with your leadership team and get final approval.

- Review the results of Step 5 with your agency's executive leadership team. You should provide them with the broad list of competencies and definitions you developed in Step 2.
- The Competency Model you finalized in Step 5 is based on what distinguishes exemplary performance in the context of current policies, procedures and expectations.
- The executive leadership team may wish to include in the model some "transformational competencies" – those competencies where employees are generally weak, and which if improved, would result in improved agency performance.

### Transformational Competencies

Transformational competencies can be extremely important when an agency seeks changes in the way jobs will be done in the future. A child welfare agency introducing the Family-to-Family service-delivery model will expect workers to establish strong collaborative partnerships with community agencies, clients, their families and neighborhoods. The competency *Collaboration* may not distinguish exemplary employees under the old service delivery model, but may be crucial for a successful transition to the new program model.

## Special Considerations

Occasionally, circumstances within an agency are such that the recommended process for identifying competencies simply will not work well.

### *Too Few Exemplary Employees*

In order to identify the competencies that distinguish superior performance, an agency must have enough superior performers to make a reasonable assessment. Some agencies may not have been able to hire and develop high-performers. Some agencies are simply too small to have a large enough sample to do a comparative analysis of the stronger and weaker employees. In some cases, the agency may be large but the target classification, although very important, is small.

In such situations, it might not be possible to complete Step 4. The rigor of the analysis will be compromised to some extent, but the process should still be workable.

### *A New Job*

Establishing a Competency Model for a new job classification can be a bit more challenging. If your agency is implementing a new program model, it is very possible that new jobs will be created. Job reengineering may result in work functions being done very differently in the future than in the past. Nonetheless, it will still be very important to identify the competencies needed to hire, evaluate and develop employees in the new classification.

In such situations, using a modified version of Step 3 may be the most reasonable alternative. The focus group will include the people in the agency who have the best understanding of the way the new job should be performed in the future. It might even be possible to invite participants from other organizations having experience in the new program model. It would be helpful if other organizations have experience developing Competency Models for other classifications. For the most part, your focus group will be relying on their intuition and good judgment in identifying the competencies for the new job.

### *A Large Number of Classifications*

Ideally, your agency will recognize the benefits of integrating Competency Models into all HR processes throughout the organization. If so, even if your workforce planning strategy focuses on several different classifications at the same time, it may not be practical – or necessary – to complete the entire six-step process for each of classification.

- One practical approach would be to complete the full six-step process for one or two of the largest classifications or those with the greatest impact, and then apply Steps 2, 3 and 6 for your remaining classifications.
- Another approach might be to use the six-step process for a group of similar classifications – sometimes called a *classification family*. This method works in

classification families where the same competencies are generally applicable to all the jobs in the family, even though the technical skills may differ between the individual jobs.

### Competency Models across Classification Families

To save time in developing Competency Models for large numbers of classifications, it may make more sense to apply one Competency Model across a *classification family*, or grouping of similar jobs

This alternative might work well in the administrative support/clerical area for jobs such as typists, account clerks and office assistants, where the technical skills may differ for each job but the same competencies apply to all.

Similarly, many organizations use the same Competency Model for all managerial and executive-level jobs. Although the technical/professional knowledge, education and experience of the Chief Financial Officer may be different than that required for the IT Manager or Policy/Operations Manager, the competencies – such as *Visionary Leadership*, *Strategic Focus*, *Communications* and *Decision Making* – are required for successful performance in all executive-level jobs.

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## Tool 2 – Competency-Based Recruitment Strategies

**Recruitment:** *The process of surveying all sources of personnel, inside and outside the organization, to locate and attract the best possible candidates for new or vacated positions.*

Many human services agencies have a difficult time recruiting top quality applicants for the very demanding jobs they are trying to fill. Baby-boomer driven retirements coupled with a shrinking labor supply suggest that the recruitment challenge will only get tougher.

The recruitment challenges faced by small private human service agencies may be very different from those faced by the largest state, county and city public agencies. Yet they face many common challenges – some requiring basic systemic changes, and others that can be addressed in the short term. Both must be addressed if human services agencies are going to be successful over the long haul in attracting applicants with the needed education, experience and competency sets.

### ➤ Tip:

Recruiting good job applicants is everyone's job. HR usually takes the lead and coordinates an agency's recruitment activities, but every employee, every supervisor and every manager has a role – and shares in the benefits – of recruiting the best applicants.

## Closing the Recruitment Gap

Your gap analysis may have revealed that you need to attract more and better-qualified applicants. Ultimately, the applicants you hire are only as strong as those in your applicant pool.

The following steps will help you develop a gap-closing recruitment strategy to better attract more applicants and to build a pool of high-quality applicants.

- Identify your Recruitment Strategy Team
- Brainstorm possible recruitment strategies
- Select the best recruitment options to investigate and pursue
- Draft plan
- Get leadership buy-in

### Targeted Recruiting

The Lorain County (Ohio) Children Services Board hires only applicants with a MSW degree or those who agree to complete the requirements for the degree within two years of hire. They also value having a diverse workforce that includes more African Americans, Hispanics and males. Although a small child welfare operation of fewer than 150 employees, the county recruits nationally. The HR Director searches the web for the demographics of Schools of Social Work graduates across the country and conducts targeted recruitment where there appears to be high potential. Whenever possible the HR Director seeks an invitation to attend a meeting of student associations such as a chapter meeting of the National Association of Black Social Work Students.

## Step 1: Identify the Recruitment Strategy Team

Form a workgroup whose primary objective will be to develop a gap-closing recruitment plan for your agency. The team should include:

- Key Human Resources personnel.
- Staff who have knowledge and responsibility for day-to-day operations.
- Other work units as appropriate given your agency's size and organizational structure.
- Individuals with networking contacts to community resources such as other human service agencies, and University Schools of Social Work and/or Criminal Justice.

Bringing together a Recruitment Strategy Team from different parts of your agency offers a number of advantages:

- Team members may have a variety of networking contacts.
- Team members may bring new perspectives that result in creative ideas that surface through brainstorming.
- Team members may become more invested in the recruitment process and support/encourage involvement of their respective organizational units.

## Step 2: Brainstorm Recruitment Ideas

Your first team meeting should be a brainstorming session to generate as many approaches to recruiting quality applicants as possible. (Your Recruitment Strategy Team may need more than one meeting to brainstorm ideas.)

As with any brainstorming exercise, encourage “out of the box thinking”—some of the best long-term strategies evolve from ideas that initially sounded impractical.

Ask the following questions to help prompt the team to think broadly about gap-closing recruitment strategies:

1. Why do we have difficulty recruiting enough qualified applicants?
1. How can we recruit more applicants?
2. How can we recruit better-qualified applicants?
3. How can we improve the diversity of our applicant pool?
4. Can we design our recruitment strategy to reduce unwanted turnover?
5. Do we need to fill vacancies faster? If so, how?

### **An Agency-University Partnership: Maine Department of Human Services and the University of Southern Maine**

After years of frustration with the cumbersome and inefficient hiring requirements imposed by the Bureau of Human Resources, the Department of Human Services received the Bureau's approval in the spring of 1995 to pilot a new process for screening and “qualifying” applicants for Child Welfare Caseworker positions. The University of Southern Maine was invited into the partnership to help design a competency-based screening process that continues to this day to deliver top quality, screened applicants for vacancies arising within the Department.

*From Freda Bernotavicz and Amy Locke Wischmann, “Hiring Child Welfare Caseworkers: Using a Competency-Based Approach.” Public Personnel Management. Spring 2000.*

6. Do our recruitment and hiring activities need to be timed to coincide with the commencement of new employee orientations or formal training sessions?
7. Are our recruitment efforts hampered by the regulations of a central HR agency? If so, what can we do to alleviate the situation?
8. Any other relevant issues?

Use the Sample [Recruitment Strategy Planning Template](#) on the next five pages to help you go over specific gap-closing strategies and organize your plans for investigating them.





## Sample Recruitment Strategy Planning Template

Strategy	Strategy is Designed to Close this Gap:	Description	Possible Tactics	Team Action Items	Individual/s Responsible	Deadline/s
<b>Online Recruiting</b>	Not reaching majority of applicants, especially young college grads	A large percentage of employees hired by human services agencies for entry level jobs are seeking their first “career job.” Many are young, either fresh out of college, looking to establish a new career, or relocating to a new area. The newspaper want-ads are not an effective recruitment source for most of today’s applicants. Placing vacancy announcements online is more effective and economical than using most traditional forms of advertising.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.Monster.com">www.Monster.com</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.CareerBuilder.com">www.CareerBuilder.com</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.Jobs.net">www.Jobs.net</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.Hotjobs.yahoo.com">www.Hotjobs.yahoo.com</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="http://lhiresocialservices.com">lhiresocialservices.com</a> (job site specializing in human services jobs)</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.Socialworker.org/joblinks">www.Socialworker.org/joblinks</a> (specializes in human services jobs linked to the National Association of Social Workers website)</li> <li>▪ <a href="http://www.NABSW.org">www.NABSW.org</a> – National Association of Black Social Workers</li> </ul>			
<b>Campus Recruiting and Job Fairs</b>	Need to improve overall applicant pool	Both professional and paraprofessional applicants can be effectively recruited at job fairs sponsored by state workforce development agencies. College recruiting can be a very effective method for attracting applicants for professional jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Send team of HR representative with an experienced social worker or frontline supervisor to fairs – provides an opportunity for job seekers to ask both job specific and hiring process/benefits questions.</li> <li>▪ Send an “ambassador” from the agency to classrooms of social work majors to “guest lecture” or provide an agency overview.</li> <li>▪ Schedule experienced employees or supervisors to speak on a “hot topic” in the human services field at a brown bag luncheon at a local college or university.</li> </ul>			

Strategy	Strategy is Designed to Close this Gap:	Description	Possible Tactics	Team Action Items	Individual/s Responsible	Deadline/s
<b>University Partner-ships</b>	Not enough applicants with specialized social work degrees	Developing a variety of recruitment strategies with area universities, community colleges and Schools of Social Work to encourage students to pursue careers in the human services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with university deans and professors to help generate student interest in the field.</li> <li>Develop stipend program partially covering college tuition and other expenses of college students who agree to work for the human service agency for specified periods of time. (See an example by the Kentucky Cabinet for Families and Children and ten university social work programs (see <a href="http://olav.usi.louisville.edu/nrc/collab/PCW/CPbrochure.pdf">http://olav.usi.louisville.edu/nrc/collab/PCW/CPbrochure.pdf</a>)</li> </ul>			
<b>Targeted Recruit-ment</b>	Lack of diversity in targeted job/s	You may need a more diverse workforce that better reflects the client population you serve. For example, you may need to recruit employees with specific language skills, or with specialized degrees (e.g., MSWs or Criminal Justice).	Target community job fairs to increase diversity among new recruits. See an example by the El Paso County, Colorado, Department of Human Services who created a Diversity Coalition to recruit and retain minority staff. (see <a href="http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/six_doable_steps_406.pdf">www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/six_doable_steps_406.pdf</a> )			
<b>Internships</b>	Need to improve overall applicant pool	Interns sometimes are paid a stipend, but in most instances interns are fulfilling an academic requirement of the college or university. Although supervisors and/or casework staff must spend time supervising and training interns, the potential payoff is having a “known” applicant who is familiar with agency operations.	See the El Paso County, Colorado, Department of Human Services for an example (see <a href="http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/six_doable_steps_406.pdf">www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/six_doable_steps_406.pdf</a> )			

Strategy	Strategy is Designed to Close this Gap:	Description	Possible Tactics	Team Action Items	Individual/s Responsible	Deadline/s
<b>Word of Mouth</b>	Need to improve overall applicant pool	If current employees are happy in their jobs, they become one of the best sources of recruitment. Some human service agencies are so well regarded as a “great place to work” that they turn away quality applicants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Even if employees are not actively referring vacancies to friends and acquaintances, their positive “word of mouth” about the agency is a powerful recruitment source.</li> <li>Great frontline supervisors in organizations that engage and value employees are critical to being considered a “great place to work.”</li> </ul>			
<b>Employees as Recruiters</b>	Need to improve overall applicant pool	The next step beyond “word of mouth” recruiting is encouraging employees to recruit others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Issue periodic reminders to staff that vacancies exist and their referrals are appreciated.</li> <li>Offer “recruitment bonuses” to staff that refer applicants who are eventually hired.</li> <li>Tie the bonus to the successful completion of the probationary period.</li> </ul>			
<b>Keeping Jobs Filled</b>	Too many unfilled vacancies	Many human service agencies carry a large number of vacancies relative to the number of filled positions. There are many reasons – bureaucratic approval processes, heavy workloads preventing hiring managers from having the time to go through the selection process, and failure to anticipate vacancies. It is critically important to keep positions filled. Vacant positions increase the workload of all employees and add to the stress of already stressful jobs.	Hire employees in anticipation of vacancies that are projected to occur. (See examples by the Delaware Department of Children, Youth and Families and the Michigan Department of Human Services – they have significantly reduced their vacancy rates by recruiting and hiring new recruits so there is a ready pool of trained workers to step into vacancies as they arise. (see <a href="http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/CPS_Tomorrow_VacanciesRW1.pdf">www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/CPS_Tomorrow_VacanciesRW1.pdf</a> )			

Strategy	Strategy is Designed to Close this Gap:	Description	Possible Tactics	Team Action Items	Individual/s Responsible	Deadline/s
<b>Maintain a pre-screened applicant pool</b>	Too many applicants get hired with only the minimum credentials	Some human services organizations delay hiring until staff vacancies reach crisis proportions. They then initiate a recruitment process that is designed to bring new employees on board as soon as possible. The unfortunate result is hiring employees who meet the minimum requirements, but nothing more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have a pool of pre-screened, interviewed applicants always available to be called for a second interview with the hiring supervisor. When using this approach, it's important to minimize the amount of time between the initial interview and the second interview to prevent top-quality applicants from being hired elsewhere.</li> <li>Human Resources will need to do continuous recruiting and screening, even when there are no current vacancies.</li> </ul>			
<b>Realistic Job Previews (RJP)</b>	Unwanted turnover among new workers who did not understand their job when they were hired	Realistic Job Previews are designed to prevent applicants from taking jobs that they have little knowledge of, or are not suited to perform. A RJP is a recruiting tool designed to reduce "early" turnover by communicating both the desirable and the undesirable aspects of a job before applicants accept a job offer. RJP's can be in the form of videos, oral presentations, job-shadowing opportunities, and pamphlets or brochures.	Develop a Realistic Job Preview (RJP) – (see <a href="#">The RJP Tool Kit: A How-To Guide for Developing a Realistic Job Preview</a> )			
<b>Improve Hiring Flexibilities in Highly Centralized Systems</b>	Hiring process takes too long - high quality applicants are looking elsewhere for jobs	Many public-sector human service agencies are regulated by merit systems that make it difficult to attract and maintain the interest of top-quality applicants. Top applicants in today's economy are searching the Internet for jobs that are available now. They aren't interested in taking a civil service exam and sitting on eligibility lists for months. In some systems, rigid requirements and lengthy inflexible scoring processes wash out well-qualified applicants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek central HR agency approval for hiring flexibilities</li> <li>Move to online recruiting</li> <li>See Michigan as example of a merit system that has transformed their recruitment away from written testing to online recruiting.</li> </ul>			

Strategy	Strategy is Designed to Close this Gap:	Description	Possible Tactics	Team Action Items	Individual/s Responsible	Deadline/s
Additional Strategy:						
Additional Strategy:						

**Step 3: Determine Feasibility**

Early in the planning process – perhaps following the first meeting – team members should begin researching the feasibility of promising ideas.

Ultimately, your team will have to come to agreement on the recruitment strategy, commit it to writing, and obtain whatever approvals are appropriate for the agency's culture. Including a cost-benefit analysis or Return on Investment (ROI) data may facilitate the approval process.

**Reputations and Recruitment**

Many human services agencies have a reputation in the community as a bad place to work. If employees feel unsupported and mistreated by the agency, they talk about it to friends and family and the negative reputation wards off potential applicants. In some instances, the bad reputation is well deserved and is fueled by years of management practices that erode the confidence and self-esteem of employees. However, organizations can transform themselves and build an organizational culture that values, empowers and engages employees. Such a culture change is not easy and does not happen overnight. It requires strong leadership and a commitment to identifying the appropriate values and rewarding the associated competencies throughout the organization.

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## Tool 3 – Competency-Based Employee Selection

**Selection:** *The process of matching people and jobs. The decision-making process in hiring – it typically involves multiple interviews and interviewer ratings, and it may make use of performance tests and assessment centers.*

In assessing your workforce needs, you've probably determined that you'll have to develop strategies to improve your selection process. Virtually every organization planning for the future realizes that it will have to focus considerable energy on the hiring process, even if only to replace employees who have left the organization through normal attrition and baby-boomer retirements.

Your analysis also probably demonstrated that your organization can do a better job of selecting employees who have the competencies most critical to the agency's success.

We introduce **behavioral interviewing** as the most reliable way of selecting applicants who possess the competencies critical to exemplary job performance and an agency's success. Studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of behavioral interviews in assessing competencies in job applicants.<sup>6</sup>

More and more organizations, including state and federal agencies, are using behavioral interviewing, also known as performance-based interviewing. Behavioral interviews focus on past behaviors and ask candidates how they have handled certain situations in the past. The underlying premise of behavioral interviewing is that past behavior is predictive of future behavior.

The Competency Model described in [Tool 1](#) serves as the foundation for the behavioral interviewing selection process described in this Tool.

### How Behavioral Interviewing Works

Having a basic conceptual understanding of behavioral interviewing is key to its successful implementation. A selection process based on behavioral interviewing requires:

1. Identifying the critical competencies associated with performing a job well.
2. Assessing the competencies of the job candidate and determining whether they match those of the job for which they are applying.

Traditional hiring systems are often based on the technical qualifications for a job, and traditional interviews often focus on detailed discussions of job experience. These interviews are often based on several "stock" questions, such as:

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

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<sup>6</sup> Spencer, Lyle M. and Signe M. Spencer. 1993. *Competence at Work*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

- What could you bring to our organization?
- Why do you want this job?
- What do you think makes you the best candidate for this job?

Selection decisions are often based on the “emotional attraction” of the applicant to the interviewer: “Who do I like the best?” or “Which candidate seems to compliment my work style?”

Formal education, technical knowledge and experience are important job qualifications, and are often the threshold requirements for the job, serving as minimum credentials to make it through the screening process. However, a candidate’s attitudes, motivations and behavioral characteristics ([competencies](#)) are more predictive of superior performance.

During a behavioral interview, interviewers ask the applicant competency-based questions designed to elicit detailed information about how the applicant has demonstrated the specific competency in the past. For example, in a behavioral interview focusing on the *Customer Focus* competency, the interviewer could ask:

- Can you tell me about a specific situation where a client (customer) became angry with you because you were unable to provide what he or she wanted?
- How did you handle it?
- How did the situation turn out?

The interviewer could continue to probe for the details that provide insight into how the candidate handles difficult customer service interactions.

We believe there are several advantages to behavioral interviewing, including:

- Behavioral interviewing requires candidates to provide answers to questions based on what they have actually done, rather than what they might imagine they would do in a hypothetical situation.
- Behavioral interviews, when properly conducted, provide in-depth information about the applicant’s actions, motives, thought processes and behaviors because the interviewer has an opportunity to ask follow-up questions to gain a much clearer understanding of how the candidate handles real-life work situations.
- Behavioral interviews promote equal opportunity since they reduce the likelihood of bias due to superficial and personal characteristics. Candidates are evaluated on what they have actually done rather than on how they look or how personable they are.
- It is difficult for the candidate to “fake” a good answer in a behavioral interview because they must provide details in response to probing questions. Answers about real-life examples can also be verified with reference checks.
- The quality of the candidate assessment is equivalent to that gained through an assessment center process, but at far less cost.



## Developing a Behavioral Interviewing Process

The steps to develop a behavioral interviewing process include:

1. Identifying which job competencies to focus on during interviews.
2. Developing and asking the right interview questions.
3. Interview scheduling and logistics.
4. Scoring and evaluating behavioral interviews.

### Step 1: Identify the Competencies to Focus on During the Interview

There are two basic guidelines to follow in identifying which competencies to focus on in your behavioral interviews:

1. Identifying a reasonable number of competencies to focus on and the number of questions to use for each competency.
2. Choosing the type of job competencies that are most difficult to develop in an employee.

**The number of competencies and questions:** Experienced interviewers find that asking two or three questions for each job competency, along with probing follow-up questions, is necessary to adequately assess an applicant's strengths in that competency area. It is better to conduct an in-depth interview on six to eight competencies than to attempt a broad-brush interview on all of them.

**The type of competency:** Some competencies reflect characteristics that are inherent in one's personality, either inherited or learned at a very early age (*Stress Tolerance*). Others reflect characteristics that are learned later in life and can be more easily developed through training and other work/life experiences.

As illustrated in Column 2 of Table 2, during the selection process you should focus on the competencies that are most difficult to develop through training and on-the-job experience. Hiring someone who naturally works well under pressure, for example, is likely to be more successful than developing this behavior through stress management training.

#### ➤ Tip:

As so aptly stated by Spencer and Spencer in their book, *Competence at Work*, "You can teach a turkey to climb a tree, but it is easier to hire a squirrel."

*Spencer, Lyle M. and Signe M. Spencer. 1993. Competence at Work. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.*

**Table 2: Competency Focus for HR Processes – Child Welfare Caseworker**

Competencies	2 Recruitment and Selection(1)	3 Performance Management	4 Professional Development
<i>Adaptability</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Building Trust</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Collaboration</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Communication</i>	Writing sample and overall interview	Required	Optional
<i>Continuous Learning and Professional Development</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Cultural Competence</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Customer/Client Focus</i>		Optional	Optional
<i>Decision Making/Problem Solving</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Planning and Organizing</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Stress Tolerance</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Teamwork</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill</i>	Resume clarification and overall interview	Optional	Optional
(1) Behavioral interview questions will be asked in the seven competency areas denoted with an "x". The <i>Communication</i> competency will be scored based on answers to the other questions and on the scoring of the written exercise administered by the agency. The <i>Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill</i> competency will be scored based on answers to the other behavioral questions, the applicant's education and experience, and answers to direct questions asked about experience.			

## Step 2: Develop and Ask the Right Interview Questions

The next step is to develop questions designed to provide as much information as possible about the applicant's experience in each competency. In essence, you will be inviting applicants to "tell their story" about a specific situation in the past where they exhibited a particular competency.

Each question should elicit three specific pieces of information:

1. A description of the **situation**.
2. The applicant's **role, responsibility** or **action** in the situation or incident.
3. The specific **outcome** of the situation or incident.

For the *Stress Tolerance* competency, an example of a three-part question would be:

<b>Situation</b>	Sometimes tensions run high in the kind of work we do. Can you describe a stressful situation or interaction you have had with a supervisor in the past?
<b>Role, Responsibility, Action</b>	What did you do? How did you respond?
<b>Outcome</b>	What happened? What was the final outcome?

**Situation:** This is the primary line of inquiry; you'll ask each applicant this question in the same way. Slight modifications to the question are appropriate where circumstances warrant. (For example, if interviewing an applicant with no prior work experience, the word "individual" in the above question can be substituted for "supervisor.")

**Role/Responsibility/Action and Outcome:** These are follow-up or probing questions; you'll ask these questions as appropriate in the context of the each applicant's response – the follow-up and probing questions may be quite different from one applicant to another.

### ➤ Tip:

Remember: The point of behavioral interviewing is to learn as much as possible about the applicant's experiences, behaviors and thought processes in the competencies important to the job. You'll be scoring applicants on how well they exhibit the competency – not how well they interview!

On the next page are some sample competency-based behavioral interview questions for some competencies common to jobs in human services agencies.



## Competency-Based Behavioral Interview Questions

### Adaptability

Please describe a significant change you have had to deal with at work recently.

Possible follow up questions:

- What was your initial reaction to the change?
- What was your overall response?
- How did it all work out?

### Building Trust

Can you tell us about a situation where you found it challenging to build a trusting relationship with another individual?

Possible follow up questions:

- How did you go about doing it?
- How did it work out?

### Collaboration

Can you tell us about a time when you formed an ongoing working relationship or partnership with someone from another organization to achieve a mutual goal?

Possible follow up questions:

- What did you do to make the relationship ship work?
- How has it worked out?

### Continuous Learning and Professional Development

Aside from your formal academic education, can you think of something you have done to grow professionally in the recent past?

Possible follow up questions:

- Did you have a chance to apply what you learned on the job?
- How?
- What was the outcome?

### Cultural Competence

Can you tell us about a time when you needed to be particularly sensitive to another person's beliefs, cultural background, or way of doing things?

Possible follow up questions:

- What were the circumstances?
- What did you do?
- How did the situation work out?

### Decision Making/Problem Solving

Can you tell us about a really difficult decision you had to make at work recently?

Possible follow up questions:

- How did you go about making the decision?
- What alternatives did you consider?
- How did it turn out?

### Stress Tolerance

Can you recall a particularly stressful situation you have had at work recently?

Possible follow up questions:

- What happened?
- What was your role in the situation?
- Did you do anything specific to deal with the stress?
- How did it all work out?



### Techniques for Conducting Good Behavioral Interviews

- Attempt to put the applicant at ease – The initial step in any good job interview is to help the applicant feel comfortable in what is usually a stressful setting. Engaging in a few minutes of “small talk” usually breaks the ice. Since many applicants have never participated in a behavioral interview, it is helpful to provide a brief explanation of the process at the beginning of the interview.
- Give applicants reassurance if they have trouble recalling specific examples – Some applicants will have a difficult time thinking of specific examples in response to certain questions. Encourage them to take some time to think about the question. Remind applicants with little work experience that examples from their college experience or their personal life are appropriate. If an applicant appears to be stuck on a particular question, offer to ask the next question and come back to this question later in the interview. Often, examples that come up in later questions trigger an example from an earlier one.
- Keep the applicant focused on the specifics – Some applicants have a tendency to speak in generalities. Watch for phrases like, “I always,” “I usually” and “I never.” Respond by asking for specifics, by redirecting the applicant with phrases like, “We’re looking for a specific situation,” or “Can you give a specific example of that?”
- Keep the applicant focused on what he or she did – Some applicants tend to use the word “we” even when talking about something done individually. Since it is very important to clearly understand precisely what the applicant did, it may be necessary to politely keep reminding the applicant that you are only interested in what he or she did. Offering an explanation of why the applicant needs to use the word “I” usually helps.
- Focus the applicants on facts rather than opinions – Some applicants couch their answers in the context of what they believe rather than what they did. If the applicant makes statements such as “Clients are always my top priority,” you should respond by asking them to provide a concrete example.
- Keep the applicant focused on past behaviors – Even if you ask for a specific example, some applicants may respond as if they were asked a hypothetical question. Simply remind the applicant that you need specific examples from the past.

### Step 3: Scheduling Interviews and Other Logistics

**Time:** We recommend scheduling one hour to conduct a behavioral interview with applicants for frontline workers and frontline supervisor jobs. The scoring process usually takes an additional 15 or 20 minutes. If you’re planning to conduct multiple interviews in one day, scheduling them 1½ hours apart is usually sufficient. After you gain experience with the process, you may need to make adjustments.

**Personnel:** There are many ways human services organizations handle their screening and interviewing processes. Some examples include:

- The supervisor of the vacancy screens and interviews.
- Human Resources staff screen and interview.
- Human Resources staff does a resume/application screening, and/or telephone screening and/or in-person screening and the hiring supervisor conducts the final interview.
- A panel of management representatives (including some combinations of supervisors, managers, HR staff, Affirmative Action/EEO staff, etc.) screen and/or interview.

➤ **Tip:**

**Time Allotments for a Typical Behavioral Interview**

Introductions, explanation of process & clarification of resume	5 minutes
Questions about education, experience & required skills	10 minutes
Competency-based questions	40 minutes
Applicant questions and wrap-up	5 minutes

There is no single best method that would meet the needs of every human service agency. However, we do believe you can strengthen the selection process significantly by using a panel of two or three interviewers in the behavioral interview:

- Behavioral interviews result in applicants providing such a wealth of detailed information that it is useful to have at least one person take notes while another asks questions and focuses on the interaction with the applicant. Detailed notes are very useful when scoring the applicant after the interview.
- The scoring process is strengthened when panelists share their perspectives and observations as they work to reach a consensus.

#### **Step 4: Score and Evaluate the Applicant Interview**

Although there are a number of techniques for evaluating applicants, we believe the process we describe here will serve most organizations very well. Use the [Interview Evaluation Report and Guidelines](#) on the next six pages as a template for scoring your applicants.



## Interview Evaluation Report

Classification: \_\_\_\_\_

Candidate Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation:

☐ Hire Now

☐ Consider for Future Opening

☐ Do Not Hire

### Competencies

**Instructions:** Check the rating next to the numeric score that best represents the candidate's proficiency level in each competency area based on the applicant's responses. Write appropriate comments below. Tally the numeric scores in the right-hand column.

Competency	No Evidence of Proficiency	Marginally Proficient	Proficient	Exceeds	Greatly Exceeds	Numeric Score
Adaptability	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Building Trust	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Collaboration	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Communication	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Continuous Learning	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Cultural Competence	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Decision Making/ Problem Solving	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Stress Tolerance	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Total Score						

Comments:

## Functional/Technical Skills

**Instructions:** In the space provided, indicate the candidate's score for each category, using only the highest score for that category. (For example, if a candidate has both a BSW and MSW, the Education Score would be four points, not seven.)

Functional/Technical Skill	Score
As evidenced from answers to interview questions. (Use the 5-point scale above.)	
<b>Education</b> (MSW = 4   BSW = 3   Masters in Human Services Area = 3   Bachelors = 2)	
<b>Experience</b> Public/Private Agency Child Welfare Case Manager = 4 Other Professional Child Welfare = 3 Paraprofessional Child Welfare = 2 Child Welfare Field Placement or Intern = 2 Child Welfare Volunteer Work = 1	
<b>License</b> (Any state license/professional certification = 2)	
<b>Total Score</b>	
<b>Comments:</b>	



## Possible Disqualifiers

**Appearance:** (Sloppy, Disheveled, Poor Grooming, Inappropriate Dress)

**Poise:** (Very awkward, No social skills)

**Interpersonal Skills:** (Hostile, Defensive, Resistant, Evasive, Argumentative, Cold, Snobbish, "Chip on Shoulder, Lacks enthusiasm)

**Commitment:** (Shows little interest in position, only interested in "a job")

**Writing Ability** (Disorganized, Poor Grammar, Poor Sentence Structure)



## Guidelines: Interview Evaluation Report

Each candidate in the interview process deserves to be scored carefully, using the same criteria for each applicant. Criteria fall into three separately-scored categories:

1. Evaluation of the **Competencies**
2. Evaluation of **Education, Experience, Special Knowledge and Skills (E&E)**
3. Disqualifiers

The scoring of the first two categories is intended to evaluate applicants relative to each other – not to combine them for an overall evaluation score.

### Evaluating Competencies

- Asking each applicant the same competency-based behavioral questions will ensure a fair evaluation of the applicants on the same set of competencies.
- Having an interview panel of three interviews offers a good check and balance during the scoring process.
- Have the definitions of the competencies in front of the interviewers during the interview and scoring process – this will help assess proficiency levels.

1. Assign each applicant a score for each competency using the five-point rating scale in the [Interview Evaluation Report](#).
2. Focus on the proficiency level evident in the applicant's answer.
3. In assessing the proficiency level of the applicant, ask yourself questions such as:
  - How recent was the example the applicant described?
  - How relevant is the example to the kind of job being applied for?
  - How well did the applicant handle the situation described relative to the expectations of our agency?
  - How large was the applicant's role in the situation described?
  - Was the outcome described by the applicant a desirable one given the circumstances?
  - For middle and top-management level positions, what were the impact and scope of the applicant's examples?

#### ➤ Tip:

In many instances, applicants answering a question on one competency will provide insight into their proficiency in others as well. During the scoring of one competency, you will find yourself looking back into other parts of your notes to refresh your memory about information relevant to the competency you're currently scoring.

## Evaluating Education, Experience, Special Knowledge and Skills

Your applicants have presumably met the education, experience and other minimum requirements for the job in order to qualify for an interview. The purpose of scoring these characteristics is to objectively compare applicants within this category.

- You can find parts of the E&E scores from the application/resume (degrees, years of experience, and specialized skills).
- The score for *Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill* is based, in part, on answers to the specific questions asked during the early part of the interview.
- In most instances, applicants with work experience will use many work-related examples as they answer the behavioral questions. Information from those answers should be factored into the E&E score.

## Disqualifiers

- Occasionally applicants present themselves in a way during the interview that raises a red flag such that they disqualify themselves irrespective of their scores in the other two categories.
- Examples might include a person who uses inappropriate profanity, who is obnoxiously overbearing, or who is seriously unkempt and disheveled.
- Some agencies require applicants to complete a writing exercise on agency premises when they appear for the interview. If the job requires the ability to write reasonably well, and applicants are unable to demonstrate their ability, they are disqualified from further consideration on that basis alone.

## Final Evaluation and Selection

Once you've tallied your applicants' scores, you can easily compare them to help make your selection decision. The way you use the scores depends on your situation.

The example on the next page illustrates how you can use the scoring to help make your selection decision. In this example:

- The maximum score on Competencies is 35 (7 competencies with a maximum score of 5 points each).
- The maximum score for E&E is 15 (see [Interview Evaluation Report](#)).
- The agency has two vacancies to fill.

### Summary: Applicant Interview Scores

Applicant	Competency Score	E & E Score	Total Score	Notes
A	33	4	37	Second Choice: Little experience, but great potential
B	32	12	44	First Choice: High scores in both areas.
C	31	4	35	May have been third choice if there was a mix of experience levels on staff
D	29	7	36	May have been third choice. Requires detailed check of interview notes
E	27	10	37	May have been third choice if all other staff had little experience
F	24	7	31	Probably wouldn't hire because of marginal competency scores
G	23	14	37	Lots of experience, but poor competency scores – wouldn't hire
H	22	4	26	Wouldn't hire

- Applicants A and B both have high competency scores, but B scored much higher on Experience and Education. Applicant B is offered and accepts the job.
- The second position is offered to Applicant A who has little experience, but based on the competency scores has the potential to be a great employee after getting some training and experience.
- Had applicant B turned down the job offer, Applicant C would have been offered the job if there had been a good mix of experience levels on the staff. Applicant C has little, if any experience, but has good competency scores. Had all of the other staff been new, the agency might consider offering the job to D or E. (The agency may not want to offer both jobs to inexperienced applicants when employees currently on the staff are also inexperienced.) Although E's competency scores are somewhat marginal, E has more experience. This would be a difficult decision for the agency, because the short-term benefit of hiring E might be short sighted. A year from now, C has the potential of being a better employee. The agency may want to go back and take a closer look at the scores – by competency – for applicants C, D and E before making the final decision.
- Applicant G had the highest E&E scores and the second highest total score (the misleading result of mixing apples and oranges) of all the applicants. Under a more traditional hiring approach, G may have been the first choice. However, under the competency-based, behavioral interviewing model, the agency would not consider G for hiring because of the low competency score.

---

## Tool 4 – Competency-Based Performance Management

**Performance Management:** *Daily, year-round, continuing appraisal, coaching and feedback that involves helping employees understand the nature and quality of their performance, identify what they need to do to improve, and motivate them to do it.*

Your gap analysis may have revealed a significant gap between performance expectations and actual performance in your target classification/s. Although improving employee performance often requires a multi-faceted approach involving staffing, policy and training, an important gap-closing strategy centers on improving the agency's performance management system.

### Understanding Performance Management as a Gap-Closing Strategy

Figure 3 presents a graphical overview of the performance management process as a gap-closing strategy:

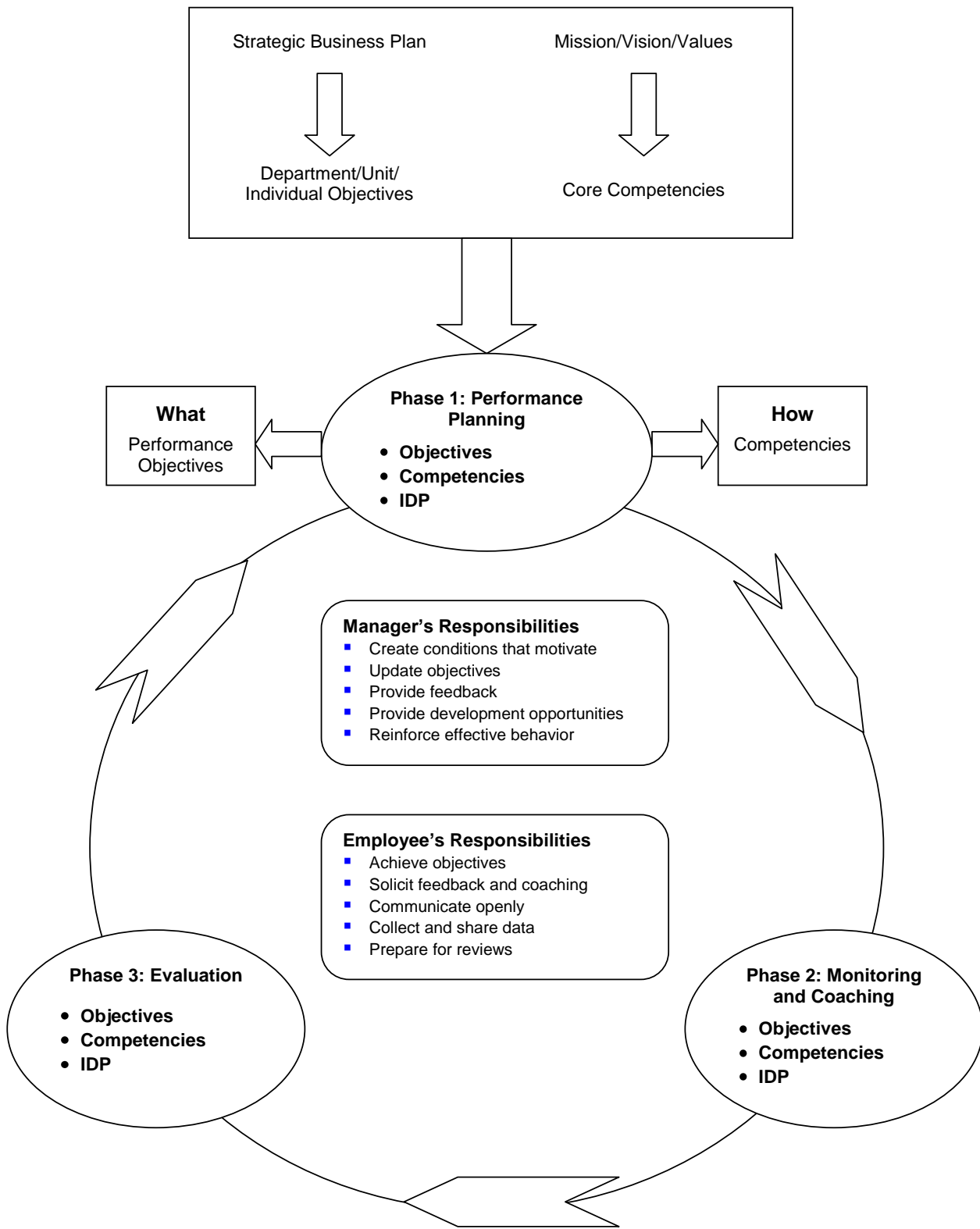
- The process begins with your agency's strategic business plan, and its mission, vision and values.
- The goals and objectives at the bureau, division, work unit and individual employee levels should be aligned with your agency's strategic plan.
- The core competencies selected for the target classification should support your organization's mission, vision and values.

#### A Performance Management Summary – Child Welfare Caseworker

- **Desired Agency Outcomes:** Children will be kept safe. All allegations of abuse and neglect will be promptly investigated.
- **Performance Objective** (Supervisor and Caseworker): Over the course of the coming year, 98% of all investigations of child abuse and neglect will be completed within 30 days.
- **Achievement Level** (Caseworker): 83% of investigations were completed in 30 days. 12% percent were 1 to 5 days late. 3% were 6 to 10 days late. 2% were between 10 and 30 days late.

#### Supervisor's Analysis of Relevant Competencies:

- **Planning and Organizing:** Caseworker is always disorganized and fails to set priorities. The fact that 12 percent of the investigations were less than 5 days late suggests that better organization and prioritization very likely would have made the difference between timely reports and late reports.
- **Stress Tolerance:** Caseworker's inability to handle stress appears to result in her jumping back and forth between tasks without completing them. She almost becomes immobilized when deadlines approach.

**Figure 3: Strategy-Based Performance Management**

## The Three Components of Performance Management

Well-designed performance management systems typically include **three components**. These components are the focus in each of the three phases of the performance management cycle.

- **Objectives:** Identifying and evaluating employees' major work objectives – this is a measurement of *results*.
- **Competencies:** Evaluating employees on the competencies that you have determined are associated with superior job performance – this is a measurement of the *behavioral characteristics that impact results*.
- **Development:** Creating Individual Development Plans (IDPs) to enhance employee strengths and to close performance gaps as determined by the competency evaluation.

### ➤ Tip:

- Objectives measure the **What** of the job.
- Competencies measure the **How** of the job.

If an employee fails to meet certain work objectives, the competency evaluation will typically reveal the reasons why. Evaluating employees on the critical competencies for a position does much more than that, however. An employee can meet their performance targets, yet be rude to customers, disrupt the team, and fail to keep commitments. Providing employees with performance feedback on competencies gives them the information they need to be successful.

## The Three Phases of Performance Management

We define **three phases** of the performance management process:

- **Phase One – Performance Planning:** During Phase One, supervisors and their direct reports:
  - Identify major work objectives.
  - Review competencies.
  - Establish individual development plans (IDPs).
  - Identify action steps for achieving both the performance objectives and personal development.

- **Phase Two – Monitoring and Coaching:** During Phase Two, supervisors work closely with direct reports to monitor progress toward meeting the major work objectives and follow through with planned professional development activities.

Phase Two is really the backbone of the successful performance management system – it is a continuous process. Employees need regular reinforcement to help maintain focus on their goals, and get regular encouragement to participate in professional development activities. There is a range of options for providing feedback – some organizations require formal monitoring and coaching sessions on a quarterly basis. In others, supervisors incorporate monitoring and coaching into their everyday interactions with their direct reports.

- **Phase Three – Evaluation:** During Phase Three, supervisors evaluate performance results for objectives, Individual Development Plans and competencies. In many organizations, supervisors perform a unilateral assessment of all three. However, the process is much more effective when employees participate fully by completing self assessments of their objectives and competencies. Even when employees' self-assessments are inaccurate, there can be tangible benefits from a process that requires employees to think through their degree of proficiency in the competencies most important for success.

On the next six pages, you'll find a sample [Performance Assessment and Development Form](#) that you can customize to meet your specific needs. Section 1 focuses on identifying and assessing an employee's competencies, Section 2 on developing and evaluating objectives, and Section 3 on building an Individual Development Plan.





## Performance Assessment and Development Form

### Employee Identification

Name:	Employee ID Number:
Classification:	Work Unit:
Supervisor's Name:	Review Period Start Date: Ending Date:

### Review of the Performance Plan

I certify that I have reviewed the competencies/ performance objectives and IDP identified on this form and received a copy.	I certify that the competencies, performance objectives, and Individual Development Plan will provide the basis for reviewing this employee's performance.
Employee Signature and Date:	Supervisor Signature and Date:

### Performance Review Summary

Overall Evaluation:				
Greatly Exceeds Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Occasionally Meets Expectations	Unsatisfactory
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comments:				

### Certification

I certify that I have had the opportunity to read this review and understand that I am to receive a copy of it. I further understand that my signature does not necessarily mean that I agree with the review.

Employee's Signature and Date:

I certify that this report constitutes my review of the performance of this employee for the period covered.

Supervisor's Signature and Date:

I certify that I have read this review and concur with it.

Manager's Signature and Date:

## Section 1: Child Welfare Caseworker Competencies

Competencies are defined as the knowledge, skills, behaviors, personal attributes and other characteristics needed for successful performance of the job.

### Required Competencies for the Child Welfare Caseworker

<b>Collaboration:</b> Builds constructive working relationships with clients/customers, other work units, community organizations and others to meet mutual goals and objectives. Behaves professionally and supportively when working with individuals from a variety of ethnic, social and educational backgrounds. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Builds Relationships</li> <li>Seeks and Contributes ideas</li> <li>Facilitates agreements</li> <li>Comments:</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greatly Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfactory
<b>Communication:</b> Clearly conveys and receives information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message, and invites response and feedback. Keeps others informed as appropriate. Demonstrates good written, oral, and listening skills. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organization and clarity</li> <li>Listening skills</li> <li>Keeps others informed</li> <li>Written Communication</li> <li>Sensitivity to others</li> <li>Comments:</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greatly Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfactory
<b>Cultural Competence:</b> Cultivates opportunities through diverse people; respects and relates well to people from varied backgrounds, understands diverse worldviews, and is sensitive to group differences; sees diversity as an opportunity, challenges bias and intolerance. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows respect and tolerance</li> <li>Challenges bias and intolerance</li> <li>Seeks opportunities to be inclusive</li> <li>Comments:</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greatly Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfactory
<b>Planning and Organizing:</b> Organizes work, sets priorities, and determines resource requirements; determines necessary sequence of activities needed to achieve goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Works in organized manner</li> <li>Sets priorities</li> <li>Plans ahead to meet deadlines</li> <li>Comments:</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greatly Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfactory

<b>Teamwork:</b> Participates as an active and contributing member of a team to achieve team goals. Works cooperatively with other team members, involves others, shares information as appropriate, and shares credit for team accomplishments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Contributes to organizational goals</li> <li>▪ Carries fair share of responsibility</li> <li>▪ Offers to help teammates</li> <li>▪ Shares credit</li> <li>▪ Comments:</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greatly Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfactory
<b>Optional Competencies for the Child Welfare Caseworker</b>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greatly Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfactory
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Greatly Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exceeds Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Occasionally Meets Expectations
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsatisfactory

## Section 2: Child Welfare Caseworker Objectives

### Guidelines For Drafting Objectives

- **Specific** – They must state exactly what an employee is to achieve.
- **Measurable** – They must include quantifiable terms, usually dealing with quality or quantity. They must be measurable enough to determine whether the employee met the objective.
- **Achievable** – They must be reasonable and realistic with a reasonable effort. While many organizations use the term “stretch” objectives to connote the idea of challenging one’s capacity, they must still be something the employee believes is possible to achieve.
- **Relevant** – They must be aligned with the strategic direction of the organization or the employee’s own personal development.
- **Time-bound** – They must state when the employee is expected to complete the objective.

**Objective 1:** Over the course of the coming year, 98% of all investigations of child abuse and neglect will be completed within 30 days

**Evaluation:**

Exceeded	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did Not Achieve	Relative Weight (% of total job importance)	20%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**Objective 2:** Over the course of the coming year, 99% of investigations will be initiated within 24 hours of when the report of abuse and/or neglect is received by the agency.

**Evaluation:**

Exceeded	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did Not Achieve	Relative Weight (% of total job importance)	25%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**Objective 3:**

**Evaluation:**

Exceeded	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did Not Achieve	Relative Weight (% of total job importance)	15%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**Objective 4:**  
**Evaluation:**

Exceeded	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did Not Achieve	Relative Weight (% of total job importance)	30%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**Objective 5:**  
**Evaluation:**

Exceeded	Achieved	Partially Achieved	Did Not Achieve	Relative Weight (% of total job importance)	10%
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

### Section 3: Individual Development Plan

Competency to Develop	Developmental Activities	Target Date	Date Completed	Supervisory Comments
	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
Competency to Develop	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
Competency to Develop	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
Competency to Develop	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Review Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Review Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Sample IDP with Development Activities

Section 3: Individual Development Plan				
Competency to Develop	Developmental Activities	Target Date	Date Completed	Supervisory Comments
Communication	1 Attend 1-day workshop on "Improve Your Listening Skills"	4/15/200x		
	2 Complete web-based training - "Enhancing your Presentation Skills"	6/30/200x		
	3 Read book "Communicate with Confidence"	9/30/200x		
	4 Join Toastmasters and attend at least 4 meetings during the year.	12/31/200x		
<b>Competency to Develop</b>	1 Attend workshop "Strengthening the Agency Through a Diverse Workforce"	2/17/200x		
Cultural Competence	2 Read book: Understanding Yourself from the Perspective of Others"	7/30/200x		
	3 Join the agency's Diversity Coalition and attend all meetings during the year	12/31/200x		
	4			
<b>Competency to Develop</b>	1 Attend "Team Decision Making" training	3/22/200x		
Collaboration	2 Establish an ongoing working relationship with a colleague from 3 community agencies.	12/31/200x		
	3 Using one of my cases as an example, prepare and deliver a 10-minute presentation at staff meeting about how family/community involvement provided a positive case outcome.	5/30/200x		
	4			
<b>Competency to Develop</b>	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			

Employee Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Review Date \_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Review Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Guidelines for Developing Performance Management Components

### Objectives

Setting meaningful and measurable performance objectives is key to any good performance system. Creating good performance objectives requires careful thought. The SMART acronym will be useful as supervisors and employees design appropriate objectives. Good performance objectives should be:

- **Specific** – They must state exactly what an employee is to achieve.
- **Measurable** – They must include quantifiable terms, usually dealing with quality or quantity. They must be measurable enough to determine whether the employee met the objective.
- **Achievable** – They must be reasonable and realistic with a reasonable effort. While many organizations use the term “stretch” objectives to connote the idea of challenging one’s capacity, they must still be something the employee believes is possible to achieve.
- **Relevant** – They must be aligned with the strategic direction of the organization or the employee’s own personal development.
- **Time-bound** – They must state when the employee is expected to complete the objective.

The most worthwhile performance objectives concentrate on **outcomes**, not on activities. In the child welfare area for example, an outcome-driven objective might be to reduce the average length of time to finalize adoptions. An employee may successfully perform many activities in finalizing adoptions, but this doesn’t necessarily mean that the employee has reduced the average length of time to finalize those adoptions.

In identifying specific strategic outcomes, the goal is to push them down through the organization to the direct service delivery level to

### ➤ Tip:

For most employees, focusing on between three and seven objectives is appropriate during each performance evaluation cycle.

### The Hamilton County (Ohio) Pay for Performance System

In 1998, Hamilton County Job and Family Services (HCJFS) introduced a pay-for-performance system where all frontline staff are eligible for merit pay based on their success in meeting specific performance objectives. HCJFS places tremendous value on developing meaningful and measurable performance objectives linked to the agency’s strategic plan. They use a collaborative approach where union and management committees work together to develop and refine the major work objectives for each job classification. Key units within the agency – Quality Assurance, Policy and Human Resources – are also involved in this collaborative effort, and have developed sophisticated data tracking systems to help supervisors measure and evaluate performance. A major outcome of the continuous focus on performance objectives is that virtually all employees clearly understand what is expected of them and how their individual accomplishments contribute to the agency’s success in achieving its strategic goals.

[www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/Performance%20PaysRW1.pdf](http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/Performance%20PaysRW1.pdf)



the extent possible. Sometimes this is easier said than done. You must take into account the ability of the frontline worker to have a real impact on the outcomes. Secondly, outcomes are often more difficult to measure the lower in the organization one goes. Nonetheless, the goal should be to find ways to focus on outcomes rather than activities. In most human services agencies, employees and supervisors (and sometimes even managers) are not accustomed to focusing on outcomes. You may receive considerable “push back” when introducing outcome-based performance objectives. Organizations that introduce the concept gradually over several performance-evaluation cycles may meet less resistance.

Not all of your agency’s performance objectives should be driven from the top. Frontline supervisors and their direct reports should be encouraged to develop unit-specific and employee-specific objectives. Employees will feel a greater sense of ownership and commitment when they have a say in setting the objectives that impact their jobs. A successful approach for some organizations has been to have a workgroup identify a series of skillfully crafted objectives from which the employee and supervisor select – and customize as necessary – the ones that are most appropriate for that specific employee.

### *Competencies*

[Tool 1](#) describes the process for identifying the critical competencies for your target classification. Competencies measure the **How** of a job. Table 3 shows an example of the competencies for a Child Welfare Caseworker position; column 3 shows which competencies would be used in the performance management process.

**Table 3: Competency Focus for HR Processes – Child Welfare Caseworker**

Competencies	2 Recruitment and Selection	3 Performance Management	4 Professional Development
<i>Adaptability</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Building Trust</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Collaboration</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Communication</i>	Writing sample and overall interview	Required	Optional
<i>Continuous Learning and Professional Development</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Cultural Competence</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Customer/Client Focus</i>		Optional	Optional
<i>Decision Making/Problem Solving</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Planning and Organizing</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Stress Tolerance</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Teamwork</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill</i>	Resume clarification and overall interview	Optional	Optional

All twelve competencies are important for employees in the job classification. Some organizations may choose to provide performance feedback on all twelve competencies during each performance evaluation cycle. Others might do a more thorough assessment on seven or eight competencies.

In the example above, five competencies are identified as *Required* and seven as *Optional*. The *Required* competencies are ones that the agency wishes everyone in the classification to focus on. Your agency may want to identify required competencies when:

- They see a classification-wide need to strengthen certain competencies.
- They want to signal an organizational culture shift to support a change in the strategic direction of the agency.
- They are implementing a new initiative or other program change where new competencies will be required.

Supervisors and their direct reports can select from the *Optional* competencies those that are specific to the employee's situation. These will supplement the list of required competencies, so that each employee will be evaluated on a specific list of seven or eight total competencies.

Typically, the optional competencies selected are ones that may be important to a specific assignment or ones where the employee needs to focus developmental attention.

### Evaluating Competencies

There are countless ways of evaluating employees on their proficiency in a competency. We've identified three options with varying degrees of complexity that will all provide workable results. In each of the options we use a five-level scale:

- Greatly Exceeds Expectations
- Exceeds Expectations
- Meets Expectations
- Occasionally Meets Expectations
- Unsatisfactory

#### ➤ Tip:

Good performance management systems require – or at least encourage – supervisors to provide their own narrative comments to supplement the competency evaluation. Employees appreciate and are more receptive to honest and constructive comments than they are to a check mark in a box.



### Which Performance Evaluation Option Should I Use?

To a large extent, the evaluation option you choose will depend on how rigorously accurate your competency assessments need to be. And this in turn depends on how much weight you place on the competency portion of the overall assessment and how you intend to use the overall assessment.

- If your agency uses the competency assessment to reinforce agency values and/or primarily as a development tool, then the rigor of the assessment is less important. The purpose of the assessment (particularly when employees do a self-assessment) is to encourage a dialogue between the employee and supervisor about competency strengths and developmental needs. This discussion serves as the foundation for the IDP. **Option 1** may be sufficient for your purposes.
- If your agency weights the components of the performance evaluation, the rigor of the competency assessment should correspond to its overall weight. For most human services jobs, we believe a good weight distribution is Objectives: 60%, Competencies: 40%. For weighed components, try using **Option 2**.
- If your agency is using competency evaluations as the basis for merit pay (i.e., where the competency assessment carries a greater weight than the performance objectives assessment), then the competency assessment process must be as objective and rigorous as possible. You may want to consider using **Option 3** below.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Competency Evaluation Options

Option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Requires relatively little effort to implement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Doesn't permit specific assessment of the key elements within the broad competency definition.</li><li>▪ Rating Scales don't permit the specific assessment of the key elements within the broad competency definition. Consequently, inter-rater reliability cannot be expected to be high.</li></ul>
Option 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Relatively easy to implement but does require that you identify the key elements of the competency.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Assessing each key element requires supervisors to spend a bit more time on the evaluation process since they are expected to give thoughtful consideration to the ranking of each key element separately.</li><li>▪ The rating scales offer little guidance to the rating supervisor on how the rating levels differ from one another.</li></ul>
Option 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Utilizes Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) which minimize the subjectivity of evaluating employees on competencies.</li><li>▪ Provides both employees and supervisors with the common yardstick to use in evaluating performance.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Developing good BARS can be time intensive and difficult work.</li><li>▪ Evaluators find the evaluation process very tedious. Even when the statements are concise, reading through the BARS for four to six key elements for seven or eight competencies is tedious.</li><li>▪ Evaluators may become frustrated by the fact that concisely-worded BARS still do not accurately describe observed performance.</li></ul>



## Evaluating Competencies – Option 1

The simplest evaluation plan involves rating competency proficiency in very broad terms. The sample evaluation form below requires an assessment against the broad definition of the competency.

### Option 1 Sample Competency Evaluation Form

**Communication:** Clearly conveys and receives information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message and invites response and feedback. Keeps others informed as appropriate. Demonstrates good written, oral and listening skills.

Greatly Exceeds Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Occasionally Meets Expectations	Unsatisfactory
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Comments:

## Evaluating Competencies – Option 2

Option 2 involves rating proficiency on each of the key elements of the competency. The evaluation form is designed to require the supervisor to assess each key element on the five-level rating scale as shown below.

### Option 2 Sample Competency Evaluation Form

**Communication:** Clearly conveys and receives information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message and invites response and feedback. Keeps others informed as appropriate. Demonstrates good written, oral, and listening skills.

	<b>Greatly Exceeds Expectations</b>	<b>Exceeds Expectations</b>	<b>Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Occasionally Meets Expectations</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>
<b>Key Element</b>					
<b>Organization and Clarity</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Listening Skills</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Keeping Others Informed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Written Communication</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sensitivity to Others</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Comments:</b>					

## Evaluating Competencies – Option 3

Option 3 also involves rating proficiency on each of the key elements of the competency. In order to minimize subjectivity, you can use Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (BARS) to describe the range of performance levels for the key elements of a competency, as illustrated in the sample form below.

Developing good BARS can be time intensive and difficult work. A focus group of employees and supervisors familiar with the job begins by describing the range of behaviors observed within each of the key elements of the competency. Those examples are aligned with the rating scales, and rewritten into concise statements.

### Option 3 Sample Competency Evaluation Form

<b>Communication:</b> Clearly conveys and receives information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message and invites response and feedback. Keeps others informed as appropriate. Demonstrates good written, oral, and listening skills.					
Key Element	Greatly Exceeds Expectations	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Needs Development	Unsatisfactory
<b>Organization and Clarity</b>	Conveys thoughts and ideas so as to avoid misunderstandings. Communicates with needs and expectations of audience in mind.		Conveys thoughts clearly and concisely		Has difficulty expressing thoughts.
<b>Listening Skills</b>	Listens with demonstrated understanding and empathy. Thoughtfully explores topic as appropriate		Listens actively and attentively and asks appropriate questions		Fails to listen and share feedback
<b>Keeping Others Informed</b>	Continuously fulfills all knowledge requirements of supervisors, co-workers and others.		Keeps supervisors, co-workers, and others well informed		Fails to share important information or passes on trivia
<b>Written Communication</b>	Communications are error free, have positive tone, and seem professionally written.		Communicates well in writing		Written communications are unclear, disorganized, lack substance; contain grammatical and/or spelling errors
<b>Sensitivity to Others</b>	Continuously tailors communications to match the listener/s; uses appropriate style, level of detail, grammar and organization of thoughts to actively engage the listener/s.		Consistently sensitive to cultural, gender, educational and other individual characteristics when communicating with others		Insensitive to cultural, gender, educational and other individual characteristics when communicating with others
<b>Comments:</b>   					

Although we've based our [Performance Assessment and Development Form](#) on Option 2 which we think works well for most human services jobs, you can easily modify the form to work with the other options.

### *Development*

Integrating competencies into training and development provides a valuable support system for employees to improve in areas where they have developmental needs and to enhance those areas where they have strengths. When employees have a better understanding of the behaviors the organization values, they can work on strengthening them.

We use the same Competency Model as the foundation for the professional development process as we did for the performance management process. Column 4 of Table 4 below identifies the competencies an agency could use for professional development activities, again for a Child Welfare Caseworker position.

**Table 4: Competency Focus for HR Processes – Child Welfare Caseworker**

Competencies	2 Recruitment and Selection	3 Performance Management	4 Professional Development
<i>Adaptability</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Building Trust</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Collaboration</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Communication</i>	Writing sample and overall interview	Required	Optional
<i>Continuous Learning and Professional Development</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Cultural Competence</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Customer/Client Focus</i>		Optional	Optional
<i>Decision Making/Problem Solving</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Planning and Organizing</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Stress Tolerance</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Teamwork</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill</i>	Resume clarification and overall interview	Optional	Optional

As in the performance management process, your agency may require all employees within the target classification to engage in professional development activities when:



- There is a classification-wide need to strengthen certain competencies.
- The agency wants to signal an organizational culture shift to support a change in the strategic direction of the agency.
- The agency is implementing a new initiative or other program change where new competencies will be required.

Under such circumstances, an agency may require that all employees focus on the same competencies for both performance management and professional development.

Typically, however, employees cannot focus on developing in more than three competency areas at one time. As a result, your agency may require development in fewer competencies than it requires for performance evaluations.

### Individual Development Plans

Individual Development Plans (IDPs) are a natural outgrowth of the performance management process. You can construct your IDPs based on the competency evaluation component of your performance management process.

Use the sample model [Performance Assessment and Development Form](#) to develop and monitor your IDPs.

Many successful organizations require all employees to have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) based on the competencies critical for successful job performance.

#### Michigan Department of Human Services

As an outgrowth of their strategic planning process, the Executive Management Team of the Michigan Department of Human Services decided in the spring of 2001 to reemphasize its commitment to quality client service. The agency developed a two-day customer service training program that all employees were required to attend. They also required that all employees be evaluated on the *Customer Focus* competency as part that year's performance management process.

Although the same critical competencies will apply to everyone doing the same kind of work, individual employees will have different developmental needs depending on their own strengths and weaknesses. Developing IDPs with individual employees, based on their unique needs and learning styles, results in a more productive, efficient and cost-effective approach to professional development.

Some employees may benefit from training in managing stress, while others have a greater need for training on time management and organizational skills. Employees may also have very different learning styles. Some do well with formal classroom training, while others do far better with self-paced methods such as online courses, books and videos. In [Tool 5](#), we'll discuss how your agency can provide professional development resources and opportunities designed to meet employee needs as identified in their IDPs.

---

## Tool 5 – Competency-Based Professional Development

**Professional Development:** *A continuing and deliberate organization-sponsored process aimed at assisting, encouraging and enabling professionals as individuals to improve their performance and potential – developing their knowledge, skills, abilities and values.*

During the gap-closing analysis phase of the workforce planning process, you may have identified gaps between the competencies possessed by your current workforce and those they actually need – now and in the future. In [Tool 4](#) we discussed creating competency-based Individual Development Plans (IDPs) as a strategy for closing competency gaps. In Tool 5, we focus on how your agency can provide the competency-based developmental resources and opportunities designed to meet employee needs as identified in their IDPs.

### Building a Professional Development Strategy

In the perfect world, human service agencies would have the resources necessary to provide all the professional development opportunities needed by staff. In the real world few, if any, do. As a general rule, economies-of-scale permit only the largest human services agencies to provide a regular schedule of competency-based classroom training and learning libraries filled with current books and videos.

Most agencies – both large and small, public and private – struggle just to provide basic training. Despite the obstacles, your agency can use innovative approaches to provide needed development opportunities for your staff.

It is important to take a comprehensive look at how your organization provides professional development opportunities and what can be done to enrich and expand them.

#### Training vs. Professional Development

For purposes of this Tool Kit, we draw a distinction between the terms *Training* and *Professional Development*.

- **Training** refers to the process of transferring or obtaining the specific knowledge and skills needed to carry out specific activities or tasks.
- **Professional Development** refers to the process of stimulating an individual's professional growth in the competencies associated with successful performance. Some refer to this as training in the "soft skills."

Employees demonstrating a developmental need in the competency *Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill* usually require training. Employees demonstrating a developmental need in other competencies usually require professional development.

### Step 1: Identify your Professional Development Strategy Team

- The team's objective will be to put together a professional development strategy based on the Competency Model/s identified by your agency.
- Bringing together a strategy team can provide the stimulus to think broadly about building your professional development strategy.

- Ideally, the team should include the individual/s charged with the responsibility for professional development, training, and human resources, and field operations. Other possible team members include individuals responsible for budget, contracting and purchasing.

## Step 2: Identify the Scope of the Professional Development Strategy

The next step is to understand which competencies and on how many classifications your agency has decided to focus its professional development activities. Typically, employees cannot focus on developing in more than three competency areas at one time.

Table 5 below shows a Competency Model for the Child Welfare Caseworker classification. In this example, Column 4 identifies the competencies where the agency has decided to focus development for all employees in the classification.

Using this example, the team will need to devote special attention to identifying the development strategies in the two *Required* competency areas. However, the team must also address how the agency will provide developmental opportunities in each of the competencies.

**Table 5: Competency Focus for HR Processes – Child Welfare Caseworker**

Competencies	2 Recruitment and Selection	3 Performance Management	4 Professional Development
<i>Adaptability</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Building Trust</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Collaboration</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Communication</i>	Writing sample and overall interview	Required	Optional
<i>Continuous Learning and Professional Development</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Cultural Competence</i>	x	Required	Required
<i>Customer/Client Focus</i>		Optional	Optional
<i>Decision Making/Problem Solving</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Planning and Organizing</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Stress Tolerance</i>	x	Optional	Optional
<i>Teamwork</i>		Required	Optional
<i>Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill</i>	Resume clarification and overall interview	Optional	Optional

If your organization is introducing a Competency Model for more than one classification – ideally throughout your agency – the team should identify strategies for all of the competencies used throughout the agency.

The Professional Development Strategy Team must also address:

- How the agency will provide developmental opportunities in each of the competency areas.
- How the agency will communicate the availability of such learning opportunities.

### **Step 3: Identify Professional Development Approaches**

Because learning styles are so different among adult learners, your Professional Development Strategy Team will want to consider a variety of training and development approaches.

For this step, first perform an inventory of all your agency's development approaches (e.g., training programs, books, videos, etc.) and identify the competency/s the approach addresses. On the next two pages you'll find a [Resource List Template and Example](#) to help your team do this inventory.

Expand this list by identifying other approaches your agency should consider. (You'll find a list of training and development options starting on page 90.)

Regardless of the development approaches your agency chooses, supervisors should work with their direct reports to build them into the employee's IDP and then consistently follow up on progress. In the press of regular work, employees may never get around to pursuing training and development options unless the supervisor periodically follows up on progress.



## Professional Development Resource List Template

Competency	Resource Type	Suggested Resources
	Classroom Training	■
	Web-based Training	■
	Books	■
	Videos	■
	On-the-Job Development Tips	■
	College Classes eligible for partial tuition reimbursement	■
	Mentoring Options	■

## Example: Professional Development Resource List – Communications Competency

Competency	Resource Type	Suggested Resources
<b>Communication</b>  Clearly conveys and receives information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message and invites response and feedback. Keeps others informed as appropriate. Demonstrates good written, oral, and listening skills.	Classroom Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducting Successful Meetings</li> <li>Effective Public Speaking</li> <li>Improve your Listening Skills</li> </ul>
	Web-based Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Successful Negotiations</li> <li>Enhancing your Presentation Skills</li> </ul>
	Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Beyond Hello: A Practical Guide for Excellent Telephone Communication</i></li> <li><i>Communicate with Confidence</i></li> <li><i>Getting to Yes</i></li> </ul>
	Videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>How to Communicate with Confidence and Power</i></li> <li><i>Relationship Strategies</i></li> </ul>
	On-the-Job Development Tips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe an effective communicator. Make notes of the skills you want to focus on before the event.</li> <li>Join organizations that help you develop speaking skills (Dale Carnegie, Toastmasters International, etc.)</li> <li>Ask a skilled communicator to provide individual tutoring in building your communication skills.</li> </ul>
	College Classes eligible for partial tuition reimbursement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speech 201 – ABC University</li> <li>Business Writing 131 – XYZ Community College</li> <li>Communications in a Diverse Culture 465 – ABC University</li> </ul>

Professional training and development approaches include:

- **Classroom Training:**

*Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skill* is one of the few competency areas where formal classroom training is common. Although classroom training is an expensive option – including the salary of the trainer/facilitator, the classroom, supplies and materials, travel costs to the training site, and the wages of the trainees – it can be a very effective approach for some learners.

**Leadership Development at Michigan's Department of Human Services (DHS)**

An important component of DHS' *Learning for Leaders* program relies on a set of seven core [QuickKnowledge](#) courses that employees can log onto from their work stations or from their homes. Recognizing that self-paced, computer-based learning can feel difficult and isolating, DHS requires program participants to complete homework, quizzes, and writing assignments, and to participate in online discussions and chats. DHS has integrated the services of QuickKnowledge.com and Blackboard.com so that employees can seamlessly take online courses, participate in online discussions and complete other homework assignments online.

- **Web-based Training:** Some human services organizations are using technology to reduce training costs by providing training opportunities at the employees' own work stations. Web-based training is available through internet vendors such as QuickKnowledge.com and Skillsoft.com. Other options include developing your own e-learning courses, and/or developing courses that are available to employees on CDs.

A major advantage of e-learning is that employees can receive training without leaving their work stations, participate in training at their own convenience, and learn at their own pace. A major disadvantage is that some employees won't take advantage of the training because they tend to procrastinate or simply lose sight of its availability. Another disadvantage is the lack of opportunity to participate in facilitated "self reflection" and discussions with other participants.

- **Books, Journals and Videos:** Some employees learn best by reading books and articles and others by watching videos. Maintaining a competency-based learning library of books and journals is relatively easy and inexpensive. Identify someone to be responsible for deciding which resources to purchase, cataloging and maintaining the library, keeping track of materials, etc. Training videos require a significant up-front investment, but the per-participant cost can be nominal if viewed by enough employees. Videos are most effective when watched in a group setting and followed by a group discussion.
- **On-the-Job Development Tips:** Most adult learners learn well by "doing." On-the-Job Development Tips (OJDTs) provide employees with creative ideas for engaging in new activities and experiences where their participation becomes the vehicle for learning. OJDTs are low-cost, easy to integrate into normal work activities, and effective.

Start by identifying a focus group of creative thinkers – both employees and supervisors – to develop a list of OJDs for each competency in your agency's Competency Model. Simply having this list of OJDs will spark the creativity of employees and supervisors as they work developing their IDPs. See Appendix B for a comprehensive list of On-the-Job Development Tips aligned to the Competency Library; these OJDs are adapted from those developed by the Michigan Department of Human Services.

- **Mentoring Programs:** Mentoring programs are a good way to help employees develop competencies. A particularly effective approach is to use the Individual Development Plan to identify the specific competencies to target through the mentoring program – these become the focus of the mentoring experience. Pair employees with mentors who have particular strengths in the competencies the employee needs to develop. The Internet is a good source of information about mentoring programs. (See [www.mentoringgroup.com](http://www.mentoringgroup.com) for examples.)
- **Tuition Reimbursement Programs:** Many human services organizations provide programs that reimburse employees for full or partial tuition for college-level classes intended to strengthen performance. Options include providing reimbursement only for classes related to a certain degree (like a Masters Degree in Social Work), or providing tuition for any courses that can be linked to improved performance.

Many two-year and four-year colleges and universities offer classes that can be linked to the competencies included in your Competency Model – particularly in “soft skill” areas like communications, leadership, teambuilding, etc. If your agency has tuition-reimbursement dollars available, we recommend reviewing the course catalogues from colleges in your area, linking them to the Competency Model, and publicizing the list of eligible courses so that employees can build them into their IDPs.



## Step 4: Identify Professional Development Resources

A real challenge for many human service agencies is finding the resources to provide the learning opportunities needed to support their staff. This is particularly true for small public and private agencies that lack staff specifically dedicated to providing professional development. Your Professional Development Strategy Team will need to come up with creative solutions. The following approaches – proven workable in other human service settings – may provide your team with some possible options:

- **Form training collaborations with other human service agencies.** Possible options include collaborating with other community agencies, through human services associations, and with sister agencies within your governmental unit (e.g., county child welfare agencies in states where child welfare is county administered, or agencies within a county administering different human services programs).  
  
Small private agencies can establish a professional development collaborative where resources can be shared. When several agencies pool resources, it often becomes feasible to offer instructor-led classroom training which can be purchased from any number of human resources consulting organizations. Even when purchasing web-based learning, costs per participant are lower when the number of participants is larger. Mentoring relationships also can be successfully established across agency lines.
- **Establish partnerships between public and private agencies.** A number of public state child welfare agencies (including Kentucky, Illinois, Michigan and New York) permit staff of private provider agencies to participate in the public agency's training (see [www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/six\\_doable\\_steps\\_406.pdf](http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/six_doable_steps_406.pdf)).
- **Establish partnerships between human services agencies and colleges and universities** to develop and deliver competency-based training. The University of Southern Maine and the Maine Department of Human Services established a partnership in 1989 creating the Child Welfare Training Institute (CWTI). The mission of the Institute is to enhance the professional development and organizational effectiveness of state and community child welfare providers (see [www.cwti.org](http://www.cwti.org)).
- **Provide competency-based leadership training within your agency** with senior leaders fulfilling the role of training facilitators.
  - At the Michigan Department of Human Services, many of the agency's top administrators serve as training facilitators in their ten-day *New Supervisor Institute*. Michigan has trained a number of top- and middle-managers deliver several of the agency's competency-driven training modules.
  - At the Tennessee Department of Children's Services, the Commissioner personally provided training to supervisors around the state (see [www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/six\\_doable\\_steps\\_406.pdf](http://www.cornerstones4kids.org/images/six_doable_steps_406.pdf)).
- **Identify the critical role of supervisors** in the professional development of their direct reports. Their responsibilities include:

- Working with direct reports to establish Individual Development Plans (IDP) as part of the performance management process.
- Knowing about and encouraging participation in the development opportunities offered by the agency.
- Providing on-the-job training.
- Coaching and mentoring direct reports.
- Advocating with their managers to make training and development opportunities available for their direct reports.

### **Step 5: Communicate the Importance and Availability of Learning Opportunities**

An important role of the Professional Development Strategy Team is to develop a mechanism to communicate the availability of the competency-based learning resources within your agency.

- Your agency must publicize the importance of your Competency Model/s. Everyone in your organization should have access to information about which competencies are important to which jobs. They also need to know what resources your agency provides to help them develop in the critical competency areas.
- Make your agency's resource list of professional development options available to all employees, ideally by posting it on your agency's intranet. The [Professional Development Resource List Example](#) above illustrates part of an intranet listing for an agency's resources for the *Communication* competency. (For example, the Michigan Department of Human Services' intranet includes a website where employees can click on any one of the competencies in the agency's Competency Library to find all the learning resources associated with that competency.)

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## Tool 6 – Gap-Closing Retention Strategies

**Retention:** *The process of keeping employees within the organization by taking steps to help prevent unwanted turnover.*

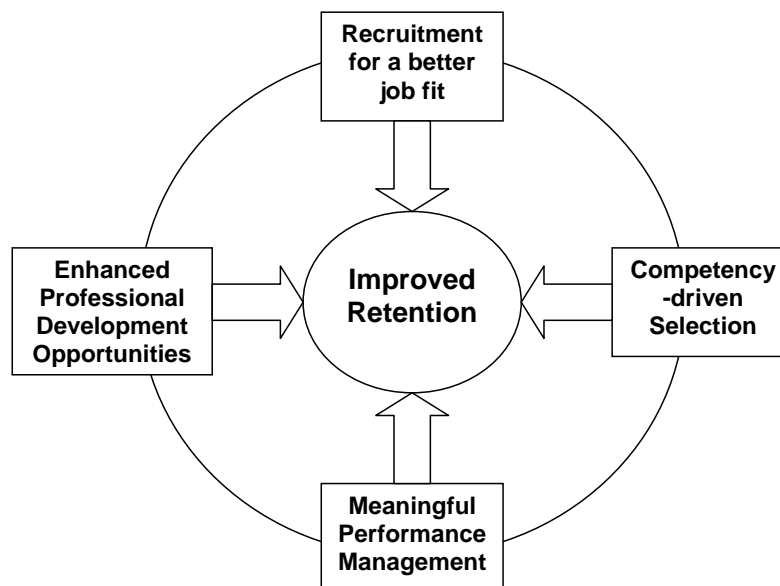
You may have identified high employee turnover as a serious threat to your agency's ability to achieve its strategic objectives. Workforce instability and high turnover result in compromised program effectiveness in many human services agencies. Your gap analysis may have revealed both staffing gaps and competency gaps due to high turnover.

Building your Competency Model into all of your Human Resources management (HRM) processes will have a positive impact on employee retention:

- Recruiting and selecting employees with the competencies associated with successful performance will result in a better job fit.
- Aligning performance management and professional development processes with the Competency Model should strengthen employees' abilities to effectively meet the challenges of the job.
- Employee loyalty and retention increase when employees clearly understand what is expected of them and receive constructive feedback on how they are doing.
- Providing competency-based development provides employees with the insights and tools necessary to become better workers and prepares them for future advancement.

Figure 4 below provides a graphical representation of how HRM processes affect employee retention.

**Figure 4: HRM Processes and Employee Retention**



## Getting Started

The reasons for high employee turnover are generally multifaceted and no single “quick fix” will solve the problem. Identifying the reasons for employee turnover in your organization is a critical first step to designing your strategy to combat it. Although human resources may have the ultimate responsibility for designing and implementing the strategies for reducing turnover, involving other key areas of your agency is critical. We recommend assembling a Retention Strategy Team, including employees and frontline supervisors of the target classification may who can provide valuable insights. The team will work through the following steps:

### Step 1: Identify the Reasons for High Turnover

Although there are a number of causes for high turnover that are endemic to many human services agencies, it is important for your agency to understand what causes high turnover among your employees. Possible reasons include:

- Low salaries
- Heavy workloads
- Paperwork and other administrative burdens that detract from the employees’ perception of the “real work”
- Poor supervision and/or lack supervisory support
- Unavailability of training and/or insufficient time to participate in training
- Low morale, often arising from organizational cultures that do not support and value employees
- Risk of violence

For a detailed discussion on the causes and consequences of turnover among child welfare workers, see the [Turnover Tool Kit](#).

**Gather information:** Through your [SWOT analysis](#), you may already have gathered the data you need to help identify the causes of turnover in your agency. You’ll use this SWOT information along with data from other sources to give you the broad perspective necessary to develop effective solutions to turnover.

Other information sources include:

- [Exit interviews and surveys](#) (EIS) provide valuable information about why employees leave an organization.
- Staff focus groups and surveys are helpful for gathering information about employee satisfaction and turnover intention.
- Detailed employee turnover reports provide insights about why employees leave the agency and help answer questions such as:
  - Is turnover within the first year after hire much higher than among more experienced employees?
  - Is there a relationship between college degree/major and tenure?

- Are there turnover differences from one work unit and another - perhaps attributable to supervisory style or the nature of the specialized functions within work unit?
- Are there turnover differences between employees in different age groups, race/ethnic groups, or by gender?

For more information about developing and analyzing detailed turnover reports, see the [Turnover Tool Kit](#).

## Step 2: Develop and Implement a Retention Strategy

Once you've identified the underlying causes of high turnover in your agency, the next step is to identify solutions that address the root causes. The [Turnover Tool Kit](#) is a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to developing strategies and solutions to address high turnover. Your Retention Strategy Team can adapt the ideas into specific approaches that can be implemented in your agency.

The [Targeted Solutions to Turnover Matrix](#) on the next two pages identifies the major underlying causes of high turnover along with strategies that are targeted to address these causes.

	Causes of Employee Turnover																		
Solutions to Employee Turnover	Admin./ Paper Work	Bens.	Burn-out	Career Growth	Client Rescs.	Suppt. from Commty.	Court Issues	Hours Conflict	Job Fit	Org. Culture	Pay Issues	Profess. Devel.	Profes-slm.	Safety Concerns	Super-vision	Inadeq. Training	Unmet Job Expects.	Work. Conds.	Work-load
Adv. Hiring			x																x
Behav. Inters.									x								x		
Career Lad./Tier				x							x	x	x						
Caseload Reduc.			x							x			x			x			x
Competitive Pay											x								
Degree Incentive				x							x								
Diversity Progs.										x									
Flex Time/Job Share			x					x		x									x
Good Place to Work			x		x	x	x			x					x	x			
Improve Phys. Environ.			x							x								x	
Job Restruct.	x		x				x		x				x				x		x
Job Rotation			x	x			x	x				x							
Just Ask			x	x				x		x		x			x	x	x	x	
Mentor			x	x			x		x	x		x				x			
Paperwrk Reduc.	x		x						x								x		x
Perform.-Based Pay										x	x								
Perform. Mgmt.				x						x		x			x				
Realistic Job Prev.	x		x						x								x		
Safety Support														x					
2nd Lang. Incent.											x								
Super. Develmt.												x		x	x				
Telecommute			x					x										x	x
In-Serv. Training	x		x		x		x			x		x				x			
Tuition Assis.		x		x							x	x				x			
Univ. Partners.									x			x					x		

Cause	Definition
<b>Administrative/Paper Work</b>	Caseworkers, who want to do "real social work," become frustrated with administrative duties such as paperwork, transporting clients, meetings, etc.
<b>Benefits</b>	Inadequate benefits to meet employee's basic needs, primarily in the areas of health care, retirement and vacation.
<b>Burnout</b>	Caseworkers find themselves emotionally unable to work productively and may find it difficult to continue working. Burn out may be caused by high levels of stress resulting from heavy workloads, erratic hours, poor supervision, the emotionally draining nature of the work, or simply because the employee is a "poor fit" for the job.
<b>Career Growth</b>	Employee feels that there are few promotional opportunities to "grow" as a caseworker either professionally or financially.
<b>Client Resources</b>	Caseworker becomes frustrated with the agency's inability to meet some of the basic needs of children and families. May also be frustrated with lack of other community resources.
<b>Community Support</b>	Caseworkers do not feel that their profession and/or agency is respected in the community. Negative media coverage.
<b>Court Issues</b>	Caseworker may be uncomfortable in court room situations, feel disrespected by attorneys and judges, and placed on the defensive. May feel court is another administrative burden that detracts from social work role.
<b>Hours Conflict</b>	Caseworker may be required to work long hours to stay "caught up." Some jobs require working overtime or being "on call" during evenings and weekends, thus interfering with personal and family life.
<b>Job Fit</b>	There is a poor match between the requirements of the job and the employee's skills, values, and/or personality.
<b>Organization Culture</b>	The atmosphere of the agency is not one that employees regard as being supportive, positive, or one where they feel valued by supervision and upper management.
<b>Pay Issues</b>	Pay is insufficient to meet basic needs or expectations. Pay may not be competitive within the community. Agency's internal pay practices may be regarded as being unfair.
<b>Professional Development</b>	Agency does not provide training or other developmental opportunities to improve professional skills or to prepare for promotional opportunities or career advancement.
<b>Professionalism</b>	Caseworkers believe that the child welfare job has become so structured and regulated by policy that their opportunity to function as a professional has been eroded.
<b>Safety Concerns</b>	Workers have concerns about their physical safety.
<b>Supervision</b>	Poor quality supervisors do not provide the leadership skills necessary to support and develop their staff.
<b>Training Adequacy</b>	Basic skill training is inadequate to provide new employees the basic skills necessary to do the job. Skill training for experienced employees is inadequate or the employee does not have the time to attend because of other work priorities.
<b>Unmet Job Expectation</b>	New employees find the job to be very different than they thought it would be when they accepted it.
<b>Working Conditions</b>	Poor physical surroundings -- inadequate office space and equipment, buildings in bad repair or bad location, inferior technological equipment and support.
<b>Workload</b>	High caseloads, and otherwise heavy workloads, create stress and anxiety.

### Using the Competency Model to Improve Supervisory Effectiveness

In many human services organizations, ineffective frontline supervision is one of the major reasons for high employee turnover. In their best-selling book, *First, Break all the Rules*, Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman present convincing evidence to support the long-held notion that frontline supervisors are key to retaining talented and productive employees. There is a very direct link between the quality of supervisors and employee morale, loyalty and commitment and job retention.

“.....people leave managers, not companies. So much money has been thrown at the challenge of keeping good people – in the form of better pay, better perks, and better training – when, in the end, turnover is mostly a manager issue. If you have a turnover problem, look first to your managers.”<sup>1</sup>

Many human service agencies tend to promote the frontline staff with the best technical skills on the often-mistaken assumption that they will make the best supervisors. Others promote those with the greatest length of service, believing that experience equates to leadership.

Just as with frontline staff, selecting supervisors based the length of their experience, their technical knowledge and skills, and aptitude for the work does not necessarily equate to excellent performance. The best supervisors are generally those who coach, develop, provide support and build trust among their staff.

Building the right Competency Model for supervisors in your organization is just as important – if not more important – than for frontline staff. Integrating your model throughout the HRM processes that impact supervisors is done the same way as for workers, and the process you use to build the model and is exactly the same as for frontline staff.

<sup>1</sup> Buckingham, Marcus and Curt Coffman. 1999. *First, Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

## Recruitment and Retention Challenges Requiring Basic Systemic Changes

Although many organizations think of recruitment and retention as very different HR issues, the fact is that in many – if not most – instances they are the “head and tail” of the same coin. The very issues that cause high turnover – low wages, heavy workloads, unsupportive supervisors and managers, the absence of community support – are the same issues that make it difficult to attract top-quality job applicants. Although most agencies understand these conditions, they’re often difficult to overcome. In many cases, the solutions aren’t found in new approaches but rather in unwavering perseverance.

- **Low wages and poor benefits** – Many human service agencies offer wage and benefit packages that are seriously inferior to those offered by other employers seeking applicants with similar education, skills and competency sets. Many applicants who would



be a good job fit in a human services agency don't rank a "high salary" as an important criterion when searching for a job.

Yet, most won't consider a career in human services if the wage and benefits package won't support a reasonable standard of living, and/or is seriously non-competitive for similar work. By the same token, low wages and poor benefits are contributing factors in the decision of many capable human services professionals to leave the field.

Human service agencies must continue to educate legislators, commissioners, boards of directors, and the public about the costs and consequences of sub-standard pay and benefits.

- **Difficult work and heavy workloads** – Employees of human services agencies, both public and private, are often faced with almost insurmountable challenges – demanding work and too much of it. An unmanageable workload is the major reason for high turnover in many human services agencies. The "community reputation" as an agency with unmanageable workloads is also a major barrier to recruiting top quality employees.

All too often, reductions in workload occur only after tragedy strikes or as the result of court orders or consent decrees. Nonetheless, when this happens, dollars are found to hire additional staff. If priorities can change after such events, priorities can change before they occur. In some agencies, the dollars that could be saved from reducing staff turnover (resulting from heavy workloads) is enough to hire additional staff, thereby reducing workloads.

Although it may not have immediate results, engaging in educational campaigns, lobbying efforts, and other strategies to reduce workloads must also be a part of many agencies recruitment and retention agendas.

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## Tool 7 – Competency-Based Succession Planning

**Succession Planning:** *The process of identifying long-range needs and cultivating a supply of internal talent to meet those future needs. Succession planning is used to anticipate the future needs of the organization and assist in finding, assessing and developing the human capital necessary to the strategy of the organization.*

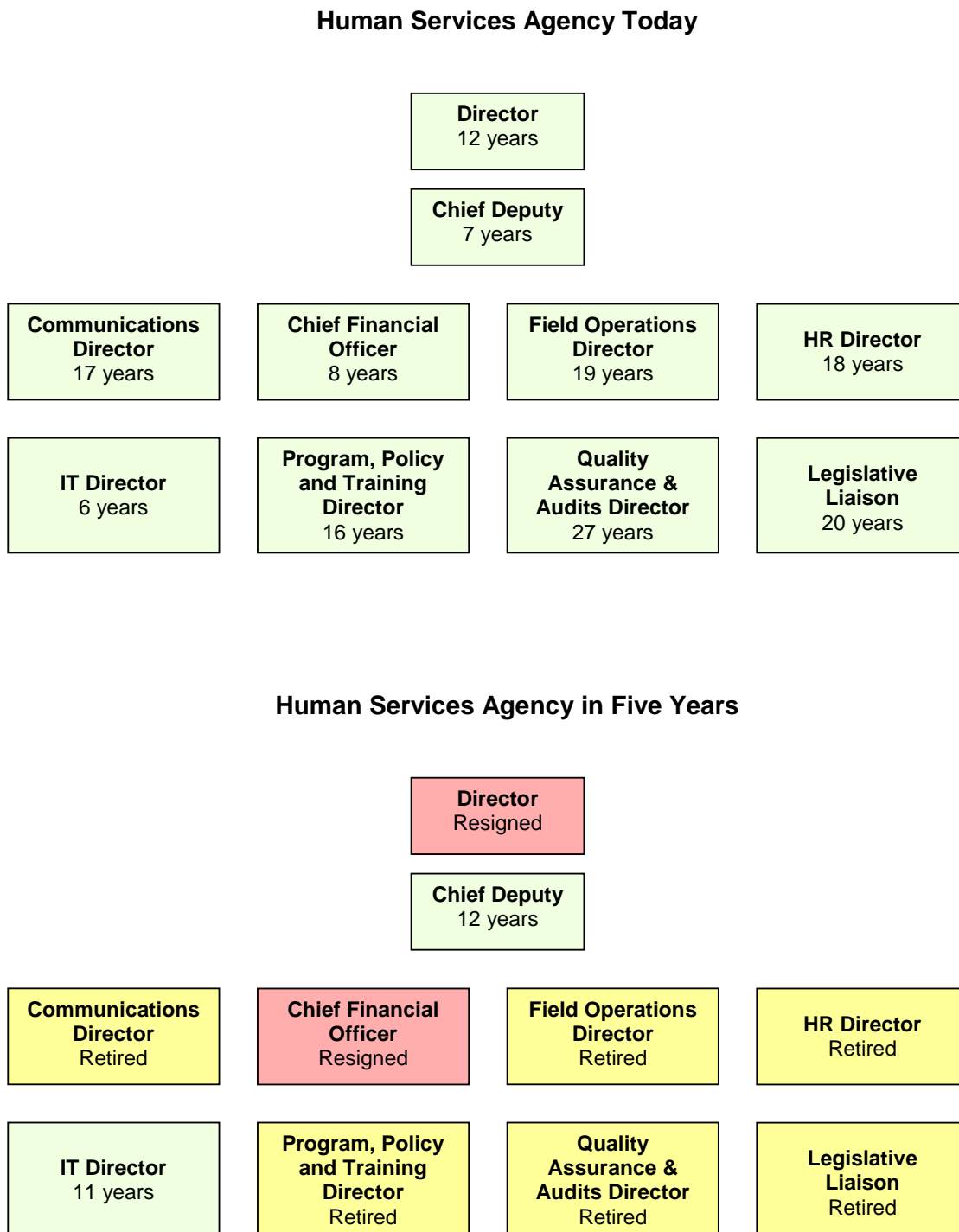
Not unlike the situation found throughout the government sector, human service agencies, both public and private, are led by middle managers and top executives already eligible – or soon to be eligible – for retirement. In many of these organizations, there is no readily available pool of highly-qualified applicants to replace them.

Your gap analysis may have revealed a very similar situation, where the projected departure of middle- and upper- level managers through retirements, resignations and internal promotions will leave “holes” in your organization with no ready solution for filling them. Figure 5 illustrates the leadership drain that many human services agencies will be facing over the next several years.

### Building the Leadership Pipeline

*Building the Leadership Pipeline in Local, State, and Federal Government* identifies and describes what local, state and federal organizations are doing to build bench strength for leadership positions of the future. Seventeen case studies from local, state and federal government jurisdictions provide practical and effective examples of succession planning efforts.

See: <http://www.cps.ca.gov/publishedarticles.asp>

**Figure 5: Snapshot of Leadership Drain at Human Services Agency**

Workforce planning is focused on having the right people, throughout the organization, in the right place at the right time. Succession planning is a subset of workforce planning, but is focused specifically on having the right leadership in the right place at the right time.

In the corporate world, individuals are often hand picked and groomed for specific positions that the company knows will become vacant in the near future. That strategy is often unworkable in the public sector where merit system rules and regulations require fair and open competition for promotions. Beyond that, in many instances such “grooming” focuses on the technical/professional parts of the higher-level job with little effort being made to develop the competencies that are so critical to successful performance.

A major benefit of establishing the Competency Model for supervisor and management level jobs in an agency is that the competencies necessary for success in those jobs are openly communicated; anyone aspiring to higher-level jobs can see where they need to focus their own development. Typically, however, that isn’t enough. The intensity of the development required is beyond what most employees are able to undertake without additional organizational support.

#### **Building a Talent Pool – Michigan DHS**

One example of a human services organization that adopted a competency-based approach to succession planning is the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS). They developed a model based on the principle of the “acceleration pool,” where a group of high-potential employees were competitively selected for enhanced development opportunities around the critical competencies identified for leadership positions. The concept of the acceleration pool is that rather than groom one or two employees for a specific position, a talent pool of employees is developed that can be tapped into to compete for any number of higher-level vacancies that might arise in the future.

See <http://www.cps.ca.gov/publishedarticles.asp>

## **Developing a Succession Planning Program**

The process we recommend to develop a succession planning program is based on an acceleration pool model, where high-potential employees are identified and provided with enhanced developmental opportunities in order to prepare them for future career opportunities. The model has seven steps:

1. Obtain leadership support.
2. Assemble a Succession Planning Team
3. Identify the agency’s leadership gaps.
4. Assess the readiness of current staff to assume those leadership positions.
5. Identify high-potential employees.
6. Diagnose their strengths and developmental needs.
7. Select and implement strategies for accelerating the development of these employees.

### Step 1: Obtain Leadership Support

Implementing a succession planning program – perhaps more than for any other HRM initiative – will require broad-based support from your agency's upper management team.

- Your succession planning program will require a significant time commitment from the leadership team. They will probably be involved in many of the planning details, and may be directly involved in selecting participants for the program. They may also participate as mentors and coaches.
- The purpose of the program is to plan for the replacement of at least some of the members of the leadership team.
- A good succession planning program will be flexible enough to accommodate the stresses that the program will put on your agency. Meaningful developmental activities may take participants away from their regular assignments on a regular basis, and perhaps for lengthy periods. Allowing participants to participate in developmental and stretch assignments will likely cause some disruption.

### Step 2: Identify the Succession Planning Team

Once you've obtained leadership support, identify a broad-based oversight group:

- The Succession Planning Team should include participants with responsibilities for HR, Training and Staff Development (if not already a part of HR), and Operations.
- Depending on the size of the organization, it might also be a good idea to have a representative from the major organizational areas of the agency.
- The team will be responsible for putting together a plan that addresses all of the steps in developing your succession planning program.
- Because of the high profile, and occasional controversy, surrounding succession planning efforts, your agency may want the Succession Planning Team to be responsible for more than just planning. The team should also be involved in implementation, monitoring and evaluating the program's success.
- The oversight group should be prepared to modify and improve the program on a continuous basis.

### Step 3: Identifying Leadership Gaps

Your agency may already have done much of the work it needs to identify its leadership gaps. Nonetheless, it is important to do a thorough analysis of the leadership positions that are critical to the organization's ability to achieve its strategic objectives.

A comprehensive succession planning strategy will address talent gaps created by:

- Expected retirements – positions where the incumbent has indicated the likelihood that they'll retire within a specified time period.

- Retirement eligibles – positions where incumbents are eligible for retirement within the next three to five years, but have not indicated an intention to retire.
- Internal promotions – where supervisors and middle managers move to higher-level leadership positions.
- The unexpected loss of incumbents in those positions considered to be highly critical to organizational success. Besides leadership positions, this may also include certain professional positions requiring highly specialized knowledge, skills or competencies.

At the end of this Tool, you'll find [Succession Planning Templates](#) which will help you develop your succession planning program. The templates include:

- [Succession Planning Status Worksheet Example](#)
- [Succession Planning Status Worksheet](#)
- [Acceleration Pool Nomination Form](#)
- [Acceleration Pool Applicant Profile](#)
- [Acceleration Pool Nomination Summary](#)

For this step, use the [Succession Planning Status Worksheet](#) and [Example](#) to help you create a leadership profile for your agency and identify upcoming leadership gaps.

In this step you will complete the first four columns of the [Succession Planning Status Worksheet](#):

- Identify the “critical” positions in your agency.
- Work with HR to determine the retirement status of the incumbents for these positions.
- Assign a “criticality” rating to each position.

#### **Step 4: Assess the Readiness of Current Staff to assume Critical Leadership Positions**

On a periodic basis, typically annually, agencies should do an internal assessment to determine the “bench strength” for critical leadership positions. If your agency has not been doing this, the Succession Planning Team should complete the baseline assessment and establish a procedure for future updates.

In order to assess current leadership bench strength, the Succession Planning Team will need to obtain input from managers within your organization about the readiness of staff with whom they're familiar to assume specific critical leadership positions. Two options for obtaining such data are to:

1. Circulate a list of the positions identified as “critical” in the [Succession Planning Status Worksheet](#) to the incumbents of those positions and ask them to provide the names of agency employees whom they believe are “currently ready” to assume each of the positions on the list.

- Ask these incumbents to identify employees who will be ready within the next year or two. Ask incumbents what competencies or job-related experiences are necessary for these employees to become fully ready to assume the higher-level job.
  - The Succession Planning Team should review the list to evaluate the recommendations, consolidate names where more than one manager has identified the same employee for a specific position, or where a specific employee has been identified for a number of different positions.
  - One of the disadvantages of using this option in a merit system environment is that merely compiling such a list could be construed as favoritism or “pre-selection.” There may also be morale issues if the list is made public, or “secrecy issues” if the list is kept confidential.
2. Ask the incumbents of each critical position to identify the number of employees within their organizational unit who are fully ready to assume their positions if they should leave. Also ask for the number of employees who will be ready within the next year or two. Remind incumbents not to provide names, only numbers.

The downside of this option is that planning is more difficult without names, and the Succession Planning Team has no ability to evaluate the managers’ assessments.

For this step, use the information you’ve gathered from your managers and leadership staff to complete the last three columns of the [Succession Planning Status Worksheet](#).

### Step 5: Identify and Select High-Potential Employees

The [Succession Planning Status Worksheet Example](#) shows that five positions should receive the highest priority in the succession planning strategy. However, limiting the strategy to only these five positions would limit the number of potential leaders targeted to receive leadership developmental opportunities, and who could fill leadership vacancies.

We recommend developing an acceleration pool (sometimes called a talent pool) of high-potential employees to receive enhanced developmental experiences. By using an acceleration pool, your agency can increase the number of employees who will be prepared to step into higher-level jobs.

Your Succession Planning Team will need to exercise care in developing a plan for selecting high-potential employees for the acceleration pool. Your team should consider the following when identifying high-potential employees:

- Your agency will be expending significant resources on the enhanced development of those in the acceleration pool – it is important to include only those who have real potential for leadership positions.
- It is equally important to develop a process that ensures that every employee with leadership potential is fairly and thoroughly considered for participation.
- If yours is a public agency, your selection process may have to conform to certain merit system standards of fair and open competition.

- Your agency will also want to ensure that the selection process results in a diverse group of employees to include in the acceleration pool.

### *Building your Acceleration Pool*

**Nomination Criteria:** Your agency's size, organizational structure, merit system regulations and culture will in part determine the nomination criteria you'll use. Employee requirements to consider include:

- Educational level/degrees
- Years with the agency
- Current or prior supervisory experience
- Classification level

It is important to remember that you are basing your criteria on the future potential of the employee, rather than their current capacity.

Use the [Acceleration Pool Applicant Profile](#) to help you determine the type of criteria your agency will use to nominate employees to the acceleration pool.

**Management Nomination/Self Nomination:** We recommend a system where employees can nominate themselves to the acceleration pool, and managers can nominate employees from within their organizational units. In both cases, nominees would have to satisfy the nomination criteria you've established for the pool.

Inviting employees to nominate themselves sends an important message about the openness of your process and is most consistent with merit system principles. Some employees may be too modest to nominate themselves; inviting management-initiated nominations may include some high-potentials who would not have self-nominated.

You can use or adapt the [Acceleration Pool Nomination Form](#) to meet your agency's needs. Asking nominees to also provide the information on the [Acceleration Pool Applicant Profile](#) will provide you with a more complete picture of the nominee's background and capacity.

**The Selection Process:** You should establish a screening process for the nominees to the acceleration pool in order to decide who to select. The three-step screening process outlined below is sufficient; there are also some additional optional steps from which to choose.

- **The Succession Planning Team does an initial screening** (Optional): your team can use the nomination materials and the [Acceleration Pool Nomination Summary](#) to summarize the information from the individual nomination forms. This step is most useful in those organizations with a large number of applicants and relatively few slots in the acceleration pool.



- **Written answers to [behavioral-based](#) questions** (Optional): Ask nominees to submit written answers of not more than two pages each to several questions related to the nomination criteria in the [Acceleration Pool Nomination Form](#). We recommend that the answers be scored by individuals within your agency who are trained on behavioral interviewing. This written exercise accomplishes has several goals:
  - Asking applicants to prepare a lengthy written document will screen out those who are not seriously interested in the process.
  - It provides a screening tool that helps reduce the number of applicants who will be given an in-person interview. (This may not be an issue in small agencies with few initial applicants.)
  - If you use “blind scoring” (the names of applicants are coded and removed from the answer sheets), the process adds credibility.
  - You can easily evaluate the applicants’ writing skills.

See [Tool 3](#) for detailed information on how to develop behavioral-based questions.

**1) In-Person Interviews** – We recommend that a panel of managers interview all remaining nominees. The interview should consist of behavioral interview questions based on the competencies the organization has identified as being necessary for successful performance in managerial positions.

- **Assessment Center Evaluations** (Optional) – You can use experienced evaluators to conduct a series of standardized activities and simulations to assess the applicants’ strengths and developmental needs. Although assessment centers have a high degree of predictability of future performance, they require a large time and resource commitment, and typically outside expertise.
- **Written Personality Inventories** (Optional) – Professionally constructed tests can objectively measure underlying personality characteristics related to certain competencies. Such tests can provide valuable information as part of the overall selection process, but normally require the agency to work with an outside vendor to purchase/administer such tests.

**2) Recommendations from Current Supervisor** – For all those candidates who take part in a manager interview, you should check for references with the nominee’s current supervisor. If a supervisor provides a negative reference, we recommend a second reference check with the next supervisory level in order to ensure the utmost fairness in the process.

**3) Final Selection Made by Executive Leadership** – We recommend that the Executive Team of the agency make the final decision about who to include in the acceleration pool. Of course, you will need to provide these decision makers with all of the data, scores and other pertinent information you’ve collected from each stage of the selection process. The Executive Team may decide to use the scoring process as a guide, but may also consider such issues as diversity and future organizational requirements in their decision.

## Step 6: Diagnosing Strengths and Developmental Needs

The individuals you've selected for your acceleration pool will very likely have different strengths and developmental needs. A major goal of the succession planning process is to help each individual learn to capitalize on his/her strengths and develop in areas where needed. Options to do this include:

- **360 Assessments:** A 360 assessment is a tool that provides the participant with a wealth of information about their competency-based strengths and developmental needs. The participant invites a variety of individuals familiar with their work – including their manager/s, peers, direct reports and sometimes customers – to complete anonymous evaluations on the relevant competencies. The participant also completes a self-assessment. The individual respondents' evaluations are aggregated to ensure anonymity and provided to the participant as part of the development assessment process. The 360 results should provide the participant with a profile of strengths and developmental needs in each of the competency areas identified.

There are a number of groups that provide guidelines on conducting 360 assessments including The Center for Creative Leadership ([www.ccl.org](http://www.ccl.org)) and The Office of Personnel Management ([www.opm.gov/perform/wppdf/360asess.pdf](http://www.opm.gov/perform/wppdf/360asess.pdf)).

- **Individual Development Plans (IDPs):** In the succession planning process, you'll use the IDP to map out the development strategy for the participant. Developing the IDP should be collaboration between the participant, the individual in your agency responsible for coordinating succession planning, and perhaps the supervisor and/or mentor as appropriate.

If your agency decides to use the 360 assessment process, it will provide valuable information that you can use for developing the IDP. Otherwise, you can use the results from the written questions and the interview as a substitute or as supplemental information. If you've elected to use assessment centers and/or personality inventories as part of your selection process, incorporate this valuable information into the IDP.

## Step 7: Selecting and Implementing Strategies for Accelerating Development

In a competency-based system, the succession planning program should involve a variety of developmental experiences for those being groomed for higher-level positions – all designed to improve proficiency in specific competencies. Options include:

- **Mentoring Programs:** Many succession planning programs include a mentoring component. In some cases, mentors are senior leaders – at least one or two levels higher in the organization and sometimes intentionally out of the chain of command – selected specifically because they have strengths in the competency areas where the participant has developmental needs. Some mentoring programs require the mentor and mentee to develop and sign agreements spelling out the goals and expectations of each of the parties in the mentoring relationship. (See [Mentoringgroup.com](http://Mentoringgroup.com) for more ideas.)

- **Developmental Assignments:** Some succession planning programs include a component where the participant works in the area of the organization where he/she has no previous experience. Developmental assignments can last from a few days to several weeks, or even months. Sometimes the short-duration assignment simply involves a shadowing experience. However, the experience can be far more valuable when the participant is actually assigned work and has responsibilities in the new area.
- **Stretch Assignments:** Similar to developmental assignments, stretch assignments require the participant to take on new responsibilities, but usually within their area of technical/professional knowledge and skill. The assignment may involve working temporarily in a higher-level position, perhaps while the regular incumbent is on leave of absence, extended vacation, or during the period while a vacant position is being filled. Stretch assignments might also involve taking on new responsibilities within one's own area such as a special project or task force role.
- **Formal Training:** Many succession planning programs provide formal classroom training opportunities for the participant/s. Sometimes participant/s attend a university-provided (or other vendor-provided) management development program. Agencies can bring speakers/trainers/facilitators to provide a class or seminar in a particular competency area. Participant/s may be invited to participate in a management training curriculum normally reserved for the top executives of the agency.
- **Action Learning:** Action Learning is a methodology that involves assigning participants to an action-learning team where they tackle strategic business issues and make recommendations to senior management. Typically, action-learning teams are composed of participants with a variety of skills, experiences and backgrounds, with perhaps none of them having real expertise in the business issue being addressed. The action learning project usually involves a high-profile issue of significant importance to the organization, and where the team is expected to make recommendations that can actually be implemented. During the action learning experience, which can often involve full- or part-time assignments for several weeks or months, periodic coaching is provided. A primary purpose of the coaching is to encourage the participants to heighten the learning experience by introspective reflection on what they are learning from the project and the team interaction process.



## Succession Planning Templates

### Sample: Completed Succession Planning Status Worksheet

Position Title	Incumbent Name	Retirement Status	Criticality	Number of Staff Ready Now	Number of Staff Ready in 1-2 Years	Succession Planning Priorities
Agency Director		A	1	1	1	
Chief Deputy			1	0	0	x
IT Director		B	1	0	2	x
Finance Director		A	1	1	2	
Budget Dir		C	2	0	1	
Accounting Dir		B	2	0	0	
HR Director		A	1	2	3	
Labor Relations		C	2	1	2	
Personnel			2	1	1	
Staff Development		B	2	2	2	
Communications Dir			1	0	0	x
Director of Policy		A	1	0	1	x
Quality and Planning			2	0	0	
Field Operations Dir		B	1	2	3	
Office A Director		B	2	1	2	
Office B Director		C	2	2	2	
Office C Director			2	0	0	
Office D Director		A	2	1	2	
Clinical Specialist		A	1	0	0	x

**Retirement Status:**

A: Retirement likely within 1 year  
 B: Retirement likely within 3 years  
 C: Retirement eligible within 5 years

**Criticality:**

1: Critical - Must "hit the ground running"  
 2: Very Important - Fully functional within 6 months

## Worksheet: Succession Planning Status

[illegible]

## Retirement Status:

A: Retirement likely within 1 year  
B: Retirement likely within 3 years  
C: Retirement eligible within 5 years

**Criticality:**

1: Critical - Must "hit the ground running"  
2: Very Important - Fully functional within 6 months

## Acceleration Pool Nomination Form<sup>7</sup>

**Nominee Name:**

**Classification:**

**Nominated By:**

**Date:**

Leadership Area	Strength	Proficient	Developmental Need
<b>Support of Agency Values</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Behaves Consistently with values	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Displays respect for others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is a good team player	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Identifies with management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Leadership Promise</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is motivated to lead	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Accepts leadership responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Mobilizes resources/people to action	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Leads teams that have high morale	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Interpersonal Skills</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Communicates clearly and effectively	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Makes effective presentations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Demonstrates diplomacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is trusted and respected	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Demonstration of Results</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Shows positive team/unit results	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Displays objective indicators of success	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Accomplishes major assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Developmental Orientation</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Has accurate self-insight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Is coachable; accepts feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Has history of learning from experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Quickly learns new tasks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
▪ Self-initiates development activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>7</sup> Adapted from Byham, William C., Audrey B. Smith, Matthew J. Paese. 2002. *Grow Your Own Leaders. Acceleration Pools: A New Method of Succession Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

## Acceleration Pool Applicant Profile<sup>8</sup>

<b>Employee Information</b>			
Name:			
Title:			
Job Classification:			
Length of Service:			
Time in Current Job:			
Current Supervisor:			
<b>Career Goals</b>			
1 to 3 Years:			
3 to 5 Years:			
Beyond 5 Years:			
<b>Educational History</b>			
Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:
Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:
Institution:	Degree:	Area of Study:	Years:
<b>Special Skills/Expertise</b>			
Languages:			
Technology:			
Professional Expertise:			
Other:			
<b>Developmental Experiences - Past 3 Years</b>			
Formal Training:	Competencies/Skills Developed:		
Special Assignments:	Competencies/Skills Developed:		
Other:	Competencies/Skills Developed:		

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from Byham, William C., Audrey B. Smith, Matthew J. Paese. 2002. *Grow Your Own Leaders. Acceleration Pools: A New Method of Succession Management*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc.

### Acceleration Pool Nomination Summary

Name	Support of Agency Values	Leadership Promise	Interpersonal Skills	Demonstration of Results	Developmental Orientation
Applicant A	S	S	S	P	S
Applicant B	S	S	P	P	S
Applicant C	P	P	S	S	P
Applicant D	P	S	P	S	P
Applicant E	P	P	P	P	S
Applicant F	D	P	P	P	P

S = Strength

P = Proficiency

D = Developmental Need



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## Appendix A – Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice Case Study

### Overview

For the past several years, the Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) has been struggling with overcrowding in their detention facility, as well as an inability to maintain appropriate staffing levels. This has led to a vicious cycle; remaining workers are pressed into overtime in order to maintain required staffing ratios, resulting in stress, burnout, and the loss of more good workers. The conditions in the facility have been suffering, and the Department's management realized that something needed to be done, both to control overcrowding and to improve the workforce.

Last, year, the Department decided to implement the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), which will address overcrowding as well as other issues in the system, but will result in a significant change in the way the Department does business. As part of JDAI, the Department has re-examined its mission, vision and strategic plan. Workforce Planning was included in the strategic planning process, and it has been integrated into the overall JDAI work plan.

A Workforce Planning Team (WPT) has been formed, lead by the Director of Operations. The Team consisted of one line staff member from each unit, two shift supervisors, the detention manager, the research and evaluation coordinator, and Human Resources (HR) coordinator. (Human Resources is centralized in the County, so the Department's HR coordinator reports to the County HR Director.) The work of the Team was officially authorized by the Senior Management Team, including the Department Director. The Senior Management Team approved the WPT Work Plan, and the WPT makes monthly progress reports to senior management.

Over the first six months the WPT made considerable progress, guided by the agency's strategic plan and the Team's Work Plan. They conducted an [Environmental Scan](#), a [SWOT Analysis](#) (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats), [Supply and Demand Analysis](#), and a [Gap Analysis](#), which were used to inform an improvement plan, including a series of [Gap-Closing Strategies](#).

#### Profile: Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice

- **Workforce Planning Initiative:** Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)
- **Workforce Planning Time Period:** 2 years
- **Workforce Concerns:** poor job fit, low salary, high turnover, adapting to new delivery model
- **Targeted Job Classification:** Detention line worker
- **Number of Budgeted Detention Line Workers:** 130
- **Number of Current Vacancies:** 15
- **Facility Capacity:** 120 youth; four 30-bed units.
- **Average Daily Population (ADP):** 150 youth
- **Staffing Ratios:** 1 staff: 5 youth on day shifts; 1:7 on overnight. (Required by law, so staff work overtime)
- **Projected APD Change:** Reduce to 120 (eliminate overcrowding) in one year.
- **Program Goals:** Fill open positions, retain existing staff, and prepare staff for shift to JDAI model.

After prioritizing the results of their environmental scan, the WPT created the following [SWOT Matrix](#):

### Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice – SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff love working with the kids</li> <li>Nearly 75% of shift supervisors have been with the agency for more than 10 years.</li> <li>JDAI may create new growth opportunities for staff in the intake and assessment unit or in detention alternative programs.</li> <li>Despite staffing shortages, all staff completes 40 hours of professional development each year.</li> <li>Since the DJJ has begun posting position openings online, the number of applicants has significantly increased.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff are overwhelmed by frequent overtime</li> <li>Line workers often make more money with overtime than salaried supervisors, so supervisory positions are not considered desirable.</li> <li>The one-year turnover rate for line staff is 30%.</li> <li>The staff does not reflect the diversity of the community.</li> <li>Many workers are struggling to adapt to the rapid changes of the JDAI initiative.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget cuts to the Department of Social Services may lead to the closing of several residential facilities in the next year, potentially affecting 100 workers with transferable skills.</li> <li>Due to increased concerns about mental health and suicide prevention, additional clinical positions have been funded on all units.</li> <li>There is legislative support for salary increases for line workers in the upcoming year.</li> <li>Three local schools of social work require students to complete a practicum, and many students seek placements working with adolescents.</li> <li>Changing neighborhood demographics have lead to an influx of bilingual and bicultural residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Urban County Department of Corrections is also facing a worker shortage, and as a result they have been intensively recruiting recent graduates. They also offer a signing bonus and higher salaries than the DJJ.</li> <li>Two local universities offer majors in criminal justice, but neither requires coursework in juvenile justice.</li> <li>The issue of overcrowding has lead to a lot of negative publicity for the agency.</li> <li>The legislature has not approved salary increases for line workers in 3 years.</li> <li>The Department of Social Services is cutting back on its in-service management training, which is previously offered to DJJ employees.</li> </ul>

After considering the results of the analysis, the Workforce Planning Team chose four areas of focus for their Gap-Closing Strategies:

- Workers do not have the correct [competencies](#) to adapt to the new way of doing business under JDAI.
- There is high turnover among frontline detention workers.
- Talented detention workers are not moving into available supervisory positions.
- The agency has trouble recruiting diverse, qualified applicants.

The Team felt that these were the fundamental issues, and that solving these problems would lead to the resolution of other issues. For example, successful recruitment would relieve chronic understaffing and cut down on overtime and burnout. The Workforce Planning Team also committed to working closely with the JDAI steering committee, since the Initiative will significantly impact the workforce for better or for worse.

As the Team prepared to tackle their focus areas, they knew they needed to consider the gaps in all [human resources functions](#):

- Recruitment
- Selection
- Performance Management
- Professional Development
- Retention
- Succession Planning

The Team decided to focus in the first year on recruitment and selection, retention and succession planning. Those areas were deemed most essential to address the targeted gaps. However, performance management and professional development are both tied closely to reinforcing the goals of JDAI, so they will be addressed in Year Two.

## **Recruitment and Selection**

To alleviate the staffing shortages, the Department had begun to post job advertisements in a variety of new ways: online on their website, message boards and job search websites; on job boards at local colleges and universities; and through the listservs of local nonprofit networks. Those efforts had yielded many more applicants, but most were not a good fit for the job. A quarter of new hires quit within the first three months, most saying that the job was “not what I expected.” This turnover was in addition to the loss of more experienced workers who did not like the reform initiative.

## **Defining Competencies**

The Workforce Planning Team realized that they needed to better define the competencies of an effective detention worker, and they needed to find a better recruitment method for the right candidates.

The Team began by engaging line staff, supervisors and managers in a series of focus group to identify the competencies of a superior detention worker. The process proved difficult; the group needed to consider not only what makes a strong detention worker, but also what allows workers to thrive in the reform environment. Competencies like “Adaptability” are much more important in the current environment than they were a few years earlier. Also, focus groups had difficulty narrowing the list of competencies to those of superior performers. For example,

“Safety Awareness” is a basic requirement of all workers; it is not an element that necessarily separates the good from the great frontline workers.

After a series of meetings, the DJJ staff was able to reach consensus on the following competencies:

<b>Action Oriented</b>
Consistently maintains high levels of activity or productivity; sustains long working hours when necessary, works with vigor, effectiveness and determination over a sustained period.
<b>Adaptability</b>
Adapts well to changes in assignments and priorities; adapts behavior or work methods in response to new information, changing conditions, or unexpected obstacles; approaches change positively and adjusts behaviors accordingly.
<b>Applied Learning</b>
Able to learn and properly apply new job-related information in a timely manner. Has the ability to absorb and comprehend job-related information from formal training and other formal and informal learning experiences.
<b>Building Trust</b>
Interact with others in a way that gives them confidence in one’s motives and representations and those of the organization. Is seen as direct and truthful; keeps confidences, promises and commitments.
<b>Communication</b>
Clearly conveys and receives information and ideas through a variety of media to individuals or groups in a manner that engages the listener, helps them understand and retain the message, and invites response and feedback. Keeps others informed as appropriate. Demonstrates good written, oral and listening skills
<b>Conflict Management</b>
Uses appropriate interpersonal styles and techniques to reduce tension and/or conflict between two or more people; able to size up situations quickly; able to identify common interests; facilitates resolution.
<b>Cultural Competence</b>
Cultivates opportunities through diverse people; respects and relates well to people from varied backgrounds, understands diverse worldviews, and is sensitive to group differences; sees diversity as an opportunity, challenges bias and intolerance.
<b>Initiative</b>
Takes action without being asked or required to; achieves goals beyond job requirements; being proactive; taking prompt action to accomplish objectives.

<b>Quality Orientation</b>
Monitors and checks work to meet quality standards; demonstrates a high level of care and thoroughness; checks work to ensure completeness and accuracy.
<b>Stress Tolerance</b>
Maintains effective performance under pressure; handles stress in a manner that is acceptable to others and to the organization.
<b>Teamwork</b>
Participates as an active and contributing member of a team to achieve team goals. Works cooperatively with other team members, involves others, shares information as appropriate, and shares credit for team accomplishments.
<b>Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills</b>
Possesses, acquires and maintains the technical/professional expertise required to do the job effectively and to create client/customer solutions. Technical/professional expertise is demonstrated through problem solving, applying professional judgment and competent performance.

### [Job Description](#)

Once the Workforce Planning Team had established the job competencies, they revisited the detention worker job description. The same description had been in place for nearly twenty years and needed to be revisited in light of the JDAI initiative. Before tackling the job description, the Team published the competency list in the departmental newsletter and solicited feedback. DJJ staff is not unionized, so staff approval was not required to make changes, but the Team wanted the process to be transparent. The headline was “Is this the person you want to work with?” Most of the feedback was positive, though some staff expressed skepticism that the bar would need to be lowered in order to fill open positions.

## Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice Detention Worker Job Description

<b>Effective Date:</b> January 1, 2007
<b>Job Title:</b> Detention Worker
<b>Job Classification:</b> Detention Worker I
<b>Salary:</b> \$25,000 – \$27,500/year
<b>Job Purpose:</b>
The detention worker is responsible for the daily structure and supervision of youth in order to meet the physical, social and recreational needs of youth while ensuring the security of the detention facility, which is designated for the short-term care of high-risk youth awaiting adjudication or placement.
<b>Goals and Objectives:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining a daily structure in the facility</li> <li>• Engaging youth in educational, social and recreational activities</li> <li>• Identifying and promptly responding to issues affecting the health and safety of youth</li> <li>• Working collaboratively with program staff, other professionals and families</li> <li>• Completing all necessary documentation</li> </ul>
<b>Reporting Relationships:</b>
<b>Title of position to whom this job reports:</b> Detention Supervisor <b>These positions report to this job:</b> N/A
<b>Duties and Responsibilities:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work collaboratively with all other staff.</li> <li>• Ensure compliance with daily structure, including meals, hygiene, education, recreation, visitation and sleep.</li> <li>• Facilitate intake and discharge of youth.</li> <li>• Continuously engage youth and serve as a pro-social role model.</li> <li>• Maintain facility safety, including crisis management, response to physical and mental health issues, and observance of all safety policies.</li> <li>• Under the direction of the shift supervisor, facilitate community access to youth, including court officers, families and service providers.</li> <li>• Under the direction of the shift supervisor, participate in the planning of pro-social and culturally appropriate activities.</li> <li>• Complete appropriate documentation, including facilitating the filing of youths' grievances.</li> </ul>

**Key Technical Skills and Knowledge:**

- Knowledge of child development and characteristics of delinquent youth
- Knowledge of diverse recreational activities
- Knowledge of juvenile court system and relevant laws and regulations
- Knowledge of crisis management and physical restraint techniques.
- Knowledge of cognitive behavioral and other rehabilitative approaches
- Knowledge of detention techniques, including DJJ policies and procedures manual
- Proficiency in Motivational Interviewing
- Proficiency with JIN, the County Juvenile Information Network
- Strong written and verbal communication skills in English required
- Strong written and verbal communication skills in Spanish desirable

**Key Success Factors:**

- Maintain a safe, structured, positive environment for detained youth.
- Facilitate pro-social skill building
- Successfully observe, interpret and respond to youth behavior.
- Function as a member of a team.
- Successfully interact with diverse youth and professionals.

**Performance Measures:**

- The employee is consistently present for work and appropriately dressed.
- The employee maintains a consistent pro-social structure on shift.
- The employee engages youth in a way that shows empathy, builds trust and encourages pro-social behavior.
- The employee responds appropriately to youth behavior
- The employee accurately completes all required documentation.

**Competency Model:**

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| • Action Oriented     | • Adaptability                                |
| • Applied Learning    | • Building Trust                              |
| • Communication       | • Conflict Management                         |
| • Cultural Competence | • Initiative                                  |
| • Quality Orientation | • Stress Tolerance                            |
| • Teamwork            | • Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills |

**Job Fit:**

- Frequent engagement in social and recreational activities; potentially physically exerting
- Working consistently as a member of a team
- Constant interaction with diverse, high-risk youth
- Working in a secure setting with constant attention to safety

**Career Pathways: Identify the classification/s that might be next career opportunities for employees in this classification.**

Detention Workers who demonstrate excellence in the competencies above will be candidates for the position of Detention Supervisor.



### Behavioral Interviews

Once the competencies had been established, the Team turned to revamping their interviewing strategies. The County Human Resource Department had expressed interest in adopting behavioral interviewing throughout the Department, and had conducted a training the prior year. The DJJ HR coordinator and the detention manager had both attended the training, and shared the process with the WPT. The Team went through several steps to establish the questions: questions were brainstormed in small groups, then reviewed and narrowed in the larger group, and then tested with some staff members. Not all of the competencies were included specifically in questions. Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills were evaluated through a more traditional review of resumes, as well as the cumulative answer to questions. Teamwork and Quality Orientation were also assessed cumulatively.

Some examples of the behavioral interview questions were:

- Describe a time where you had to help resolve a conflict between two people or groups. How did you approach the situation? How was the issue resolved?
- Describe a situation where you had to work under significant stress, and how you managed the situation?
- Describe a situation where you had to quickly learn and use a new skill. What helped you to learn most successfully?

In DJJ, the detention manager, HR coordinator, and frontline supervisors were all involved in interviewing. The WPT had the questions in place, but they were unsure how to train staff in using the behavioral interview format, and evaluating the interview. The biggest concern was how to understand how to “translate” descriptions of other experiences to and make them applicable to juvenile justice. DJJ approached the County HR Department for assistance. The HR Department partnered with the consultants that had done the original training to meet with the WPT about an evaluation guide, and then to conduct a half-day training with staff.

### *Recruiting for Diversity*

Once the department had a better sense of what they were looking for, they still needed to decide where to look, and how to give prospective applicants a better sense of the job. Lack of diversity was a significant issue. The majority of youth in the detention facility were African American and Latino, but the staff was predominately White. Also, a growing number of youth did not speak English proficiently, which hindered communication and caused safety concerns because there were not enough bilingual staff to cover every shift.

The WPT knew from their environmental scan that the demographics of their community was changing, and that more bilingual and bicultural workers were in the community. However, their recruiting strategies were not reaching the appropriate applicants. Members of the Team decided that they needed to talk to people in the community. Several key informant interviews were set up, including the local professional association for African American business professionals; managers at a local job placement agency that serves the Spanish-speaking population; and minority student associations at local universities. The Team also convened a volunteer focus group with African American and Latino staff to solicit their ideas for recruitment.



The responses from the Spanish-speaking community were relatively straightforward; recruitment done through Spanish-language media, as well as preferential hiring of bilingual/bicultural candidates, would increase the applicant pool. The interviewees were able to offer a long list of periodicals, radio stations and websites that would reach this population.

Members of the African American community had much more complex perspectives on recruiting. The negative publicity that the Department had received included a great deal of discussion of the disproportionate detention of minority youth. The negative image of the Department gave the community members pause about encouraging qualified workers to apply for jobs there. The Workforce Planning Team brought this information back to the JDAI planning Team, and two decisions were made: business leaders would be invited to participate in the Disproportionate Minority Contact working group, and more media efforts would be focused on the Agency's progress on DMC reduction. In addition, two African American line workers who were alumni of the local university scheduled quarterly meetings with the minority students' group. The meetings were focused on recruiting and also for discussing detention issues.

### *Job Previews*

To give applicants a better sense of what detention work encompassed, the Workforce Planning Team considered producing a [realistic job preview video](#), but members hesitated about the resources required to produce it. However, the Department needed some way to prepare potential hires for the job. They instead settled on a "mini-job preview." Star performers in the department were videotaped answering two questions: "What is an average day as a detention worker like?" and "What makes a great detention worker?" Interns from a local film school edited the responses to a seven-minute video that was posted on the Department's web site. All job postings encouraged potential applicants to view the video. In addition, applicants who were invited back for a second interview were also given the opportunity to tour the facility.

### *Outcomes*

Over the next six months, the Workforce Planning Team continued its aggressive recruitment strategies, and they applied the "mini job preview," the new competencies, and the behavioral interview to the selection process. The result was an applicant pool with a better understanding of the position, and an interview process that more easily identified those who were a good fit for the job. Of those who were hired during the first three months of the new system, only five percent quit in the subsequent three months; that represented an 80 percent reduction over their previous rates.

### *Next Steps*

The Workforce Planning Team also acknowledged that in the long run, they needed to address the issue that most local college graduates are not prepared to work in juvenile justice; their recruitment efforts were looking for the diamond in the rough. The Team identifies work with local universities as essential to longer-term workforce planning. However, that plan was put on the back burner until more resources could be allocated to the work.

The group also realized that hiring more diverse staff members was not enough to address cultural competency issues in the facility. Some staff members were resentful of new hires who were given preference because of their language skills, and there was debate about whether it was appropriate to speak in languages other than English in the facility, since all staff could not understand. In addition, the diverse staff created a growing awareness of cultural issues such as lack of culturally appropriate programming. When the organizational cultural survey indicated that these issues were affecting morale, the Workforce Planning Team realized that they needed to work with the JDAI steering committee to improve efforts in these areas. Improved cultural competency will be part of the Year Two of workforce planning.

## **Retention**

During the gap analysis phase of the project, the WPT instituted a process for [exit interviews](#). Interviews conducted with departing employees over the first six months of the Workforce Planning process showed three strong trends: workers who were not a good fit for juvenile justice, workers who were burned out, and workers who needed a higher income to support themselves and their families. The WPT decided to focus their retention efforts on the third area and look more closely at whether the DJJ offers competitive salaries.

The salary levels in Urban County DJJ are established by the state, with a small differential based on each county's cost of living. Urban County has the highest differential in the state, so DJJ staff was often accused of whining by state officials when they advocated for salary increases. However, staff exit interviews clearly indicated that salaries were insufficient. So, the DJJ partnered with a local business school to conduct a salary study. They compared their salaries for frontline detention workers to:

- Urban counties in adjacent states.
- Other state and local agencies that recruit applicants from similar pools (Department of Social Services, the local school systems, Department of Corrections and Adult Probation).

The study showed that DJJ workers have salaries that are 5-10 percent lower than detention workers in neighboring states, but that the salaries are 20 percent lower than adult corrections workers in Urban County. Salaries were on par with paraprofessionals working in the public schools and the Department of Social Services; both of those groups have lower educational requirements for entry-level workers.

The DJJ used this information as part of an informational campaign for the state legislature. Most legislators indicated that they were planning to vote for a salary increase, but the salary data combined with exit data information made a strong case for an increase. The legislature approved a 7 percent increase for frontline detention staff and supervisors.

## **Succession Planning**

The DJJ is very proud of its classroom training program, and all staff attends 40 hours of formal professional development each year. As a result of JDAI, the Department will be investing significant resources in revamping its training program. At the outset, there was not a formal

management training program for new supervisors. A mentoring program was considered, but that also created problems: many of the seasoned frontline supervisors were also struggling with the JDAI model, and as a result lacked the skills to train potential supervisors in the new way of doing business.

Fortunately, with the salary increases at the line and supervisor level, as well as the reduction in overtime, supervisory positions became more desirable for frontline staff, and applications for positions began to increase. As a result, the Workforce Planning Team saw their next task: applying the Workforce Planning approach to the supervisory classification. The Team now needs to better define the competencies of supervisory work, and improve the process of training, evaluating and supporting supervisors.

## Summary

The Workforce Planning Team was proud of it's accomplishments in Year One. They felt that they had taken a systematic approach to identifying the Department's Workforce Issues, and they had successfully prioritized their efforts based on the resources available. Their efforts achieved several tangible outcomes, several of which are likely to lead to reduced turnover costs for the Department. To celebrate the achievement, the Department Director acknowledged the Team with a "Team of the Year" award (which the Department may make an annual event), and highlighted their achievements in the Department's Quarterly newsletter.

However, the Team also realized that their efforts were not yet comprehensive, and that more work is left to be done. The new hiring criteria were not in alignment with performance appraisal criteria, which is a potential source of frustration for new staff. In addition, several of their efforts in Year One brought new issues to light, or brought issues to the forefront that had not been considered priorities at first. The Workforce Planning Team reviewed their [WFP Work Plan](#) and began work on their strategies for Year Two.

### Summary: Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice Gap-Closing Strategies

#### Areas of Focus:

- Define detention line worker competencies
- Reduce turnover
- Improve leadership pipeline
- Recruit diverse, qualified applicants.

#### Activities in Year One:

- Defining competencies for detention line worker
- Establish behavioral interviews
- Create "mini job preview"
- Improve recruitment of diverse staff
- Complete salary study
- Implement exit interviews
- Continue organizational climate survey

#### Outcomes for Year One:

- Increase in bilingual/bicultural staff
- Reduction in 3-month turnover rate for new staff
- Reduction in overtime
- 7% salary increase
- Improvement in Organizational Climate

#### Next Steps:

- Continue regular exit interviews and organizational climate surveys
- Monitor staff demographics and diversity
- Monitor overtime frequency
- Revisit performance management process
- Revisit professional development processes.
- Improve Cultural Competency training
- Apply Workforce Planning to Supervisory Classification
- Implement management training program
- Work with local universities to improve student's preparedness for juvenile justice careers.

## Urban County Department of Juvenile Justice Workforce Planning Work Plan

Key Challenge	Action Strategies How will we address our key challenges?	Tactics/Steps Required Specifically, how will the strategy/objective be accomplished?	Person(s) Responsible Name	Timetable Due Date	Status Not Started Started Completed Ongoing	Performance Measures/Milestones What measure will we use to determine successful completion of action items?
Agency has trouble recruiting diverse, qualified applicants	Improve recruitment and selection processes	Revise job descriptions	Director of Operations HR Coordinator	5/06	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in applicants who meet minimum qualification standards</li> <li>• Increase in applicants who are eligible for hire based on new competency model</li> <li>• Increase in new hires who successfully complete the probationary period.</li> <li>• Increase in racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of frontline workers</li> </ul>
		Make job postings more visible to diverse segments of the community	Line workers on WPT HR Coordinator	Ongoing	Ongoing	
		Develop Behavioral Interviewing Guide	HR Coordinator	7/06	Completed	
		Develop "mini" job preview	Unit Supervisors on WPT	8/06	Completed	
		Improve media image of DJJ	Department Director	Ongoing	Ongoing	
		Work with Universities to revise juvenile justice-related curricula	Department Director Training Coordinator	6/07	Not Started	
		Improve utilization of interns	HR Coordinator	6/07	Not Started	
Workers lack competencies for the new way of doing business	Align recruitment, selection, and training with new competency model.	Define competencies of superior performers	HR Coordinator	6/06	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in applicants who are eligible for hire based on new competency model</li> <li>• Number of existing frontline workers who successfully complete revised training course based on JDAI principles.</li> </ul>
		Develop Behavioral Interviewing Guide	HR Coordinator	7/06	Completed	
		Improve Cultural Competency Training	Training Coordinator	9/07	Not Started	
	Align performance appraisals with new competency model.	Revise performance appraisal form and guides	HR Coordinator Unit Supervisors on WPT	3/07	Not Started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of existing frontline workers who rate "meets" or "exceeds" on revised competency-based performance appraisal.</li> </ul>

Key Challenge	Action Strategies How will we address our key challenges?	Tactics/Steps Required Specifically, how will the strategy/objective be accomplished?	Person(s) Responsible Name	Timetable Due Date	Status Not Started Started Completed Ongoing	Performance Measures/Milestones What measure will we use to determine successful completion of action items?
High turnover in frontline detention workers	Assess and improve overall worker satisfaction	Administer organizational climate survey	Unit Supervisors on WPT	4/06, 4/07	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in new staff turnover during probationary period (3 months)</li> <li>Improvement in organizational climate</li> <li>Decrease in overall annual turnover among frontline workers.</li> </ul>
		Institute exit surveys for all departing detention workers	HR Coordinator	4/06	Completed	
		Complete Salary Study	Research and Evaluation Coordinator	7/06	Completed	
		Advocate to Legislature for salary increase	Department Director	9/06	Completed	
		Reduce overtime by filling open positions	HR Coordinator	Ongoing	Started	
Talented workers not becoming supervisors	Offer a competitive salary	Complete Salary Study	Research and Evaluation Coordinator	7/06	Completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in number of applicants for supervisory vacancies</li> <li>Increase in number of new supervisors who successfully complete the probationary period</li> </ul>
		Advocate to Legislature for salary increase	Department Director	9/06	Completed	
	Improve succession planning and leadership training	Provide specialized training on managing the reform effort	JDAI Coordinator	2/07	Started	
		Implement mentoring program	HR Coordinator	9/07	Not Started	
		Implement management training program	Training Coordinator	12/07	Not Started	

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## Appendix B – Sample On-the-Job Development Tips

The sample On-the-Job Development Tips are adapted from the State of Michigan, Department of Human Services.

## Adaptability

- When trying a new task, monitor your performance. Recognize that there is a learning curve for every new task.
- Recall situations in which you were required to change and did so successfully. Identify what helped you to change successfully. Explore ways to replicate these.
- Identify others who seem to be adapting effectively to change. Ask them for suggestions on how you might be able to adapt more effectively.
- Learn as much as you can about the change, the reasons for the change, the way in which the change will be implemented.
- Identify the potential benefits of the change and keep your focus on these.
- Understand that most change involves a period of confusion and uncertainty. Have patience with yourself and others who may be responding to this.
- Understand that most change involves some distress and grieving about what people perceive will be lost because of the change. Accept these feelings and know that they will pass.
- Read articles and books about change and adaptability in order to learn more about managing change and dealing with transitions in the workplace.
- Ask your manager to identify, as specifically as possible, your positive and negative responses to change. With that person's help, identify alternative behaviors for the negative responses you have been exhibiting.
- Indicate to your manager that you would like to be involved in planning for the introduction of a new process or procedure.
- Ask your manager to explain the reasons for change and the expected benefits of planned change.
- Observe how other coworkers react to changes in tasks, deadlines, etc. Make note of effective behavior and seek coaching from your manager on how you can model those behaviors.
- Learn about adaptability from people who adapt well to change. How do they view change? Do they turn the change into an opportunity? Ask them how you can react more positively to change.

## Applied Learning

- Schedule time to review and file new job-related information sent through memos, email messages, announcements of training programs, minutes from organizational meetings.



- Identify individuals who are able quickly to retrieve new job-related information. Ask about the structure of their filing systems. Develop a comparable filing system of your own.
- Develop a list of people that you can contact if you need clarification on information you receive about your job.
- Develop systems that will remind you to use new job-related information, i.e. a note tacked to the front of a stack of forms indicating a new coding system to be used on the forms.
- Schedule time to practice new skills learned in training programs. Make sure these skills are practiced as soon as possible after the training.
- After attending a training program, discuss the new information, knowledge, and/or skills that you learned. Develop a plan for implementing the new information, knowledge and/or skills to your job.
- Suggest that your work team work together to identify valuable information that could be used to enrich oneself or enhance service to the customer. Develop a way to share/distribute this information. Sources of information and strategies for sharing may include: e-mails, memos, newsletters, websites, training programs, TV specials, books, newspaper articles.

## Building Trust

- With the team, determine a way in which the team should handle individuals who break these rules.
- Seek feedback from peers and leaders regarding the ethical standards you should be following, setting, and modeling.
- Ask your supervisor to include trust as a competency in your performance appraisal. Seek feedback on a regular basis from others so it can be used as evidence of developmental progress.
- Think of a person in your life whom you trust very much. Ask yourself why. Write down the reasons and think of examples that illustrate those reasons. Then when dealing with others, ask yourself how this trusted person would react and try to model that behavior.
- Create a list of the commitments you have made in the past week. Review the list and identify which commitments you met and which you did not meet. Identify what is common to those commitments you met and what is common to those commitments you did not meet. Consider changing the commitments you make or look for ways that can help you to keep the commitments you do make.
- In the next week, record the commitments you make to others. Ask others to review your written commitments and see if your perception of the commitments made matches their perception. Ask them what degree of confidence they have in the extent to which these commitments will be kept.



- Make a list of five times when you feel you maintained your integrity in difficult situations. Identify what made it difficult to maintain your integrity in these situations. Describe the consequences of maintaining your integrity. Contrast this with a description of three times when you felt you did not behave with as much integrity as you wish you had. What was different about these situations? What factors made it difficult for you to maintain integrity? Looking back, what would you do differently? What were the consequences of not behaving with integrity for you and for others?
- Describe a sensitive issue or problem that you are facing. Review your description. Is there anything you have omitted? How comfortable would you feel sharing this description with others? Determine how you could "sanitize" your description so that you do not betray confidences and yet still provide a complete and accurate description of the situation to others. Identify your position in regard to the situation. Review your position. Does it really capture all the thoughts and feelings you have about the situation? What are you willing to reveal? What is more difficult for you to reveal? Share your description and position with another person. Ask them to tell you how much they trust your description and feel as though you are giving them a complete and accurate sense of your position on the issue.
- Ask your supervisor about setting up a meeting with your team to establish a team charter that spells out the rules for interaction. For example, your team might decide on the following rules: 1) keep sensitive information confidential, 2) avoid unfair criticism and gossip, 3) give and accept constructive feedback, 4) confront disagreements openly.

## Coaching

- For a week, track the positive performances of your employees. For each employee, identify at least one positive performance in the week. At the end of the week, give each employee reinforcement and acknowledgement of their positive performance. Note the reactions of each. Identify whether employees prefer to have written feedback, personal feedback, public feedback, private feedback, etc.
- Think about three performance problems you have had to manage in the past four months. Describe the problem and your response to the problem, noting as specifically as you can what you said and when you said it. If at all possible, ask the person with the problem to recall what your response to the problem was, again with as much specificity as possible. Rate yourself on the effectiveness which you handled each of these performance problems. If you are not satisfied with the way you handled one or more of these problems, write at least two different responses you might have had to the problem. Ask someone else to review your alternative responses and give you feedback.
- Role-play a coaching session with another peer. Ask the person to provide you feedback on your ability to do the following: establish a goal for the coaching session, develop a shared agreement of the current situation, generate a wide set of options for achieving their goal, and develop a clear action plan that the person you are coaching is willing and motivated to carry out. Ask the other person to also give you feedback on the extent to which they felt involved and heard in the coaching session.

- Consider the ways in which your supervisor coaches you. Identify what s/he does that motivates you to do your very best. Identify what tends to make you feel confident and capable. Identify what tends to make you feel anxious and uncomfortable. Explore the short-term and long-term consequences of feeling anxious and uncomfortable as a result of being coached.
- Recall the two people who have had the most positive impact on your career. Identify what each did to help promote you in your career goals. Find ways to incorporate these into the coaching you provide.
- Schedule time each week to coach your employees. Keep a log of the people you have coached. Make sure all of your employees receive the opportunity for coaching from you.
- Ask employees if they want more, less or about the same amount of coaching from you.
- Ask your supervisor or another person to observe your coaching behaviors and provide specific feedback, including alternative positive behaviors.
- Ask your supervisor to identify others who provide effective coaching. Discuss their approaches to coaching with them. Listen for new and consistent approaches that always seem to work.

## Collaboration

- Ask your supervisor to give you feedback about the trust others in your work-related network have in you.
- Ask your supervisor to think about his/her own work-related contacts. Ask what he/she thinks contributes to the development of strong and effective work-related contacts. Ask what can get in the way of developing such relationships.
- Ask your supervisor/mentor what groups, committees, task forces you might join that would help you expand your network of work-related contacts.
- Develop a list of the people with whom you have had work-related contact in the past month. Share this list with other co-workers. Ask them if they have had contact with others not on your list. Determine if your web of contacts is as great as it should or could be. Ask co-workers and others if they would introduce and facilitate the development of a working relationship with others whom you want on your contact list.
- Review your list of work-related contacts in the past month. Describe the nature of your relationship with each of these contacts. In which of these relationships would you go out of your way to accommodate the other person? In which of these relationships would they go out of their way to accommodate you? To what extent can you rely on each of these contacts to fulfill their commitments to you? To what extent can they rely on you to fulfill your commitments to them?

- Identify two problems or issues that you are facing in your work. For each of these, list all of the people who might be able to help you solve this problem or issue. Then ask co-workers or your supervisor to suggest others who might be added to this list.
- Develop a list of three people with whom you would like to build a good working relationship over the next three months. Learn about the role they plan in the organization and their current work objectives. Share your role and work objectives with them. Identify what you can contribute to the relationship and identify what you hope they will contribute to the relationship. At the end of three months, evaluate the progress you have made in establishing a good work relationship with each of these people. Ask them for feedback about the relationship as well.
- Create a list of the five best and the three worst working relationships you have had in the past two years. Identify common characteristics and patterns in the best working relationships. Contrast these with the worst working relationships. Identify obstacles and problems that you encountered in the worst working relationships. Ask if there was a potential for these problems in the best working relationships and how you overcame them in the best working relationships. Apply these lessons to your current working relationships.
- Review the list of people with whom you have had work-related contact in the past month with your supervisor. Ask him/her how the list compares with the kind of network s/he would like you to have. Identify other contacts that need to be added to your list and, if appropriate, ask your supervisor to help you develop these contacts.
- Ask your supervisor to identify two of your co-workers who have developed strong networks of working relationships and use these well. With his/her permission, contact these coworkers and ask questions about how they developed these networks and how they sustain them. Ask if you can observe them interacting with people in their networks. Ask if they will observe you in contact with people in your network and give you feedback
- Review your calendar for the past month. Note how often you were in contact with people outside your office and how much of your time was spent on affairs totally internal to your office. Reflect on the balance.
- Ask your supervisor to identify relationships you could form with others outside your immediate office that would help the organization reach some of its goals.
- Ask your supervisor to give you feedback on the extent to which you are known and the reputation you are building in the community of organizational stakeholders.
- Ask your supervisor about the strategic relationships he/she has built with stakeholders. Compare his/her list with your own.
- Create a chart of the people, teams and organizations with whom you have work-related contact outside your immediate office. Identify the nature of the relationship and the ways in which the relationship helps you to achieve your work goals. Identify the extent of mutual trust and respect within each relationship. Ask yourself if there are others who should be included in your chart.
- Return to this list of contacts outside your immediate office. Describe what each contact does for the organization to which they belong and the primary goals they are

pursuing currently. Ask if your knowledge of each is full enough to you to determine the potential benefits to you and them of building a strategic relationship.

- Identify three new contacts outside your office with whom you would like to build a strategic relationship. Identify the benefits might accrue to you from such a relationship and the benefits they might accrue from such a relationship. Set a goal of developing a relationship with each of these contacts in the next three months.
- List all of the collaborative projects in which you and your staff have been engaged in the past year. Identify the benefits for your organization that came from these projects. Identify the benefits that might yet come from these projects. Compare your list with the list of other managers.
- Return to the people with whom you were engaged in a collaborative effort in the last year. Ask them to provide you feedback on the extent to which they felt they understood your reasons for engaging in the collaboration and how they felt about working with you on the collaborative project. Ask specifically about the trust they felt about your ability to meet your commitments on the project.
- Ask your supervisor to identify the most successful collaborative project in which they have ever worked. Determine what made the project successful. Look for factors that contributed to success. Identify potential obstacles to success and what was done to minimize or overcome those. Specify the criteria that your supervisor used to determine the success of the project. Ask them to contrast this with a situation in which a collaborative project was not successful.
- Ask your supervisor to review your list of collaborative projects over the past year. Ask your supervisor to rate the value of each of the projects to your organization. Ask your supervisor if there is any way you might have been able to increase the value of these projects and increase the benefits of these collaborative efforts to your organization.

## Communication

- Videotape or audio tape yourself having a discussion with others (coworkers, friends, family). Listen to how you express yourself verbally and watch how you express yourself using body language.
- Practice using different types of questions (open-ended, closed, clarifying, etc.) Note the difference in the kind of responses you receive to each of the types of questions.
- Before observing an effective communicator, make notes of the skills you want to focus on before the event. Afterwards, ask for tips.
- Compare communications you have received that have been clear and concise with those that you have had a difficult time understanding. Analyze the differences in the effective communication and ineffective communications.
- Ask people to restate the message you intended to convey to them. Listen carefully for misinterpretations or distortions. Determine what you do that may be contributing to the distortions and misperceptions.

- Restate the messages that people convey to you. Determine how often you experience misinterpretations and distortions when receiving communication from others. Identify what you may be doing that contributes to miscommunication.
- Join organizations that will help develop your speaking skills, such as Dale Carnegie or Toastmasters International.
- Ask your supervisor, mentor or a skilled communicator to provide you detailed feedback about your communication skills. Ask them to provide suggestions about how you can improve your skills.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to provide you with some guidelines about what messages should be sent by email, by hard-copy email or in person.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to suggest guidelines for deciding what information should be shared with others and the time frame in which it should be shared.
- Ask your supervisor, mentor or coworker to edit a piece of your written work. Request feedback on your most common errors and suggestions for ways to improve.
- Practice writing the same informational piece to three different audiences; your coworkers, your boss, and an agency client or client group. Adjust style and language as needed. Ask each group to give you feedback on the piece you designed for them. Determine if they understood your basic message and felt the message was presented in an appropriate way for their needs and capabilities.
- Review the emails you have received over the last week from others in the agency. Identify the kinds of information that tends to be conveyed via email. Compare this with the kind of information that is included in hard-copy memos. Note what messages people choose to deliver personally and whether they tend to do it by phone or in person. Notice the impact of the communication method on your attention to the information and your understanding of messages sent through each method. Then, compare what you have learned about the kinds of messages that are sent through each communication method with the kinds of messages you send through each medium.
- Ask others with whom you work whether you share too much information, too little information or just about the right amount of information. Ask them for any other feedback they might be able to provide you that would help you to improve your communications.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to tell you how easy it is to give you difficult feedback. Ask them about what you do that makes it easy or difficult to give you such feedback. Be prepared to simply listen to their response. Do not attempt to defend yourself. After a week, meet with your supervisor or mentor and discuss with them what you want to do to make it easier for them to give you feedback. Ask for their suggestions. Practice active listening with your supervisor or mentor. Ask them for feedback on your use of active listening.
- Pick a subordinate who you believe would benefit from careful listening (e.g., someone who is dealing with a stressful/challenging situation). Then do the following: (1) Create an opportunity to have them discuss a situation with you (if they wish). (2) In conversation, indicate your interest in his/her ideas or thoughts to keep the

discussion going. (3) Use active listening to reflect both their thoughts and their feelings.

- Identify three people with whom you feel comfortable talking about sensitive or difficult experiences. Explore what each person does that makes you feel comfortable talking with him or her. Ask them to give you feedback on what you can do to create the same sense when you talk with others.
- Keep a log of situations where you felt you demonstrated effective and ineffective listening, understanding and responding. Then think about the following: How did you feel at the time you were approached by the other person? How do you think you made the other person feel? How do you think this person will feel about approaching you in the future? What adjustments did you make to your interaction style based on the individual and his/her style of interacting? Even if you felt you were effective, what could you have done to improve?
- Track the number of questions versus statements you make when talking with others. Similarly, track the amount of time you speak and the amount of time the other person speaks. If you find that you speak most of the time or tend to make a great many more statements than you ask questions, explore what happens when you change these ratios. In particular, note how much you learn about the other person and the quality of your relationship when you allow them more space to speak and when you ask more questions.
- Ask others for feedback after discussing a sensitive or difficult situation. Ask them if there were words or things that you did that made them uncomfortable. Ask them what others might do during a similar conversation that might make them uncomfortable. Ask them what could be done to make them more comfortable in such conversations.
- Increase the number of open-ended questions that you use to discover the needs, feelings, and capabilities of others. Do the following to help you make this improvement: (1) Monitor the number of open-ended questions or probes you use with others over a one-day period. (2) Consciously increase the number of open-ended questions and probes you use in conversations for the next month.
- If your manager or mentor is good at listening, understanding, and responding to others. Then do the following: (1) Arrange to spend time observing what that person says and does during interactions. (2) After you have observed him/her in an interaction, ask what he or she was thinking during the interaction. (3) Ask what tips or techniques he or she can offer to help you in your interactions with others. (4) Practice applying the new tips or techniques that you learn.
- Role play difficult situations or conversations about sensitive subjects with coworkers. Determine what words or actions are likely to inflame situations. Determine alternatives that will build connection between those involved in the conversation.
- Practice active listening techniques with coworkers. Note how active listening encourages others to tell you more of their feelings and thoughts.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to suggest ways to effectively handle sensitive issues.



## Continuous Learning and Professional Development

- Get practice in receiving and using feedback. Identify some specific aspect of your performance that you are willing and want to change. Ask at least three coworkers and your manager for feedback on this particular aspect of your performance. You might experiment with how it feels to get written feedback and face-to-face feedback. Compare their responses and your own perceptions of your performance on this particular aspect of your performance. Develop a specific goal about the extent to which you will change this behavior in a specified period of time. Share your goal with those who gave you feedback and ask for their help in achieving this goal. When you achieve your goal, ask them to celebrate your success with you. At the end, think about what you learned about getting feedback, developing a goal and enlisting the help of others to reach your goal.
- Ask a trusted co-worker to share descriptions of recent encounters with customers that did not go well. Each of you describe a separate encounter. Then, identify at least two lessons you learned from the encounter that can help you provide better customer service in the future. As you listen to the lessons learned by the other person, see if you would have drawn the same lessons. Then ask them to listen to the lessons you drew from your experience. Ask them if they would have drawn lessons similar to those you learned. Continue this as a regular practice until you become comfortable viewing your experiences as learning opportunities.
- Identify one task that you do on a regular basis that you find tedious and boring. Develop a different way to do the task and experiment with the new process until you can complete the task at least as easily and in as little time as using the old process.
- Ask your manager or mentor to help you identify and select an area in which to focus your development. Develop a goal for improved performance that is specific, measurable, realistic and identify a deadline for achieving the improved performance. Ask your manager or mentor to help you develop a list of options for ways that you can learn new behaviors that will result in the improved performance. Develop a plan that identifies when you will do what, who will help you and any other resources you may need to make the changes you want to make. Ask your manager or mentor to review your plan and help you monitor your progress toward the goal. Celebrate with your manager or mentor when you achieve your goal.
- Mentors are a valuable resource for professional development. If you do not have a mentor, consider people that you would like to be your mentor. Determine what you would like your mentor to do for you. Meet with the person you have selected as your mentor and ask if they would agree to serve as your mentor for a specified period of time. Then, talk about what each of you expects from the other.
- Create a list of personal, departmental, and organizational opportunities for fostering professional and self-development. Present this list to your manager. Ask what opportunities you have not included that might be included. Ask your manager which of these opportunities he/she would suggest as being high priority opportunities for you at this time.
- List the training experiences you have taken in the past two years. Compare this with the training experiences of your peers.

- Periodically review materials received during learning opportunities (workshops, seminars, on-the-job training). Look for new and fresh ways to use the information.
- Think about the areas that you have targeted for development in the past two years. Have they been a challenging learning experience? What have you learned? What have you mastered? What areas do you still need to work on?
- The next time a coworker or your manager suggests a new way to do something, think of at least three possible reasons it might be more effective or efficient. Force yourself to imagine the positive possibilities of a suggested change.
- Talk with fellow employees who seem to be particularly effective at learning new skills and see what tips they might share.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of formalizing the role of technical coach so that the coworkers who provide assistance to you receive acknowledgement of their efforts. Determine if there is some way you also can contribute to their performance by performing a similar centralized function.
- Before starting a new project, task or assignment, ask yourself the following questions: What have I learned recently that will help me complete this project, task or assignment? What new information has been made available to me that pertains to this project, task or assignment? How can I complete this project, task or assignment efficiently? What can I share with others about the results of completing the project, task or assignment that will help my department to better and more efficiently complete work?
- Subscribe to a professional journal in your field or join a professional association. Ask other professionals in your field to suggest journals and associations which they would recommend. Go to a library or the web and identify journals or websites maintained by professional associations in your field to determine what new developments are occurring in your profession. Expand your personal network of connections with professional in your field. Include professionals in other organizations to learn about what developments are occurring in your field and to share your own developments.
- Find peers who display a high level of technical knowledge and skill. Then do the following: (1) Talk with them about your desire to improve your technical knowledge and skill. (2) Ask them how they improve their technical knowledge and skill. (3) Ask them to provide you with feedback on your use of technical knowledge and skill. (4) Ask them to keep you informed of publications, training programs, books, etc. that might help to increase your technical knowledge and skill.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of formalizing the role of technical coach so that the coworkers who provide assistance to you receive acknowledgement of their efforts. Determine if there is some way you also can contribute to their performance by performing a similar centralized function.
- After attending a training program or seminar, review the key information, actions and behaviors. Then do the following: (1) Develop an action plan to perform or implement the key information, actions and behaviors learned during the training. (2) Describe how you, your department, your organization and your customers will benefit from



your action plan. (3) Discuss your action plan with your manager or supervisor. (4) Consider making your action plan part of your Performance Plan for the year.

- Track the amount of time you spend asking coworkers for information about updates regarding policies and procedures and/or technical information that you should know. Double this to account for the time spent by co-workers answering your questions. Now, consider the amount of time it would take you to track this information yourself.
- Schedule time to experiment with skills and knowledge you gain from either formal or informal training as close to the time of the training as possible. Practice the new skills until you are comfortable with them. Do not wait to practice and become comfortable with them.
- Review the goals and objectives you have set for yourself. Identify which of these are "stretch" goals or objectives. Compare them with the goals and objectives you developed for yourself in the past year. Do you continually raise the bar for your own performance? How clear are these goals and objectives? Will it be clear when you have achieved these goals and objectives?
- Ask the people to whom you go for information about updates on policies and procedures to explain how they track and organize this information. Implement similar systems for yourself.
- Build a network of professionals in your organization who meet on a regular basis to discuss developments in your profession and to share thoughts and experiences of applying these new developments.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of creating a central file for information about updates to policies and procedures that can be shared by all who need access to this information.
- Provide your manager with information about developments in your professional field and identify the pros and cons of incorporating these developments in your work.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of creating a series of meetings for professionals within the organization to share information and experiences with new developments in your area of expertise.

### **Customer/Client Focus**

- Consider how you have felt when you have been the customer. Then do the following: (1) Record behaviors or actions that impress you. (2) Develop a plan around how to implement these or similar behaviors and actions to impress your customers.
- Gather feedback from customers on the extent to which they believe you will meet their needs. If they doubt that you can fully meet their needs, determine why they hold this belief?
- Develop a list of all the kinds of customers you serve. Share this list with your supervisor or mentor. Ask them if there are other groups of customers that you have not included in your list.

- Obtain feedback from your supervisor or mentor on how effectively you promote and engage in behaviors that strengthen the focus on customers in the work that you do.
- Describe what you believe to be the needs of your customers. Ask customers about their needs. Compare your description with your description. Note when and where there are discrepancies. Are there needs you tend to overlook? Do you see needs that they do not see themselves as having? Do you tend to have more discrepancies with some customers than others? What contributes to these discrepancies? What questions did you ask to uncover the needs of customers? Which questions were particularly helpful?
- After each encounter with a customer, ask if their needs have been fully met. Ask what else they need in order to be completely satisfied. Ask them the following questions: How well have I meet your needs? How will have I addressed your problem, issue or concern? What can I do better the next time that I need to service you?
- Ask co-workers about the information they provide to customers about policies, procedures, issues and updates and how they convey this information to customers. Compare this with the information you provide customers. If necessary, change the way and amount of information you provide customers.
- Discuss the needs that you believe your customers have with your work group and manager. Then do the following: (1) Reach agreement on needs with work group and manager. (2) Verify that the needs have been correctly identified by informally asking the customer. (3) Document the needs of the customer. (4) Develop a job aid that gives you some tips on how to focus on their needs. (5) Post the job aid in your work area to remind yourself of their needs and how to focus on them. (6) Distribute the job aid to your entire work group so that you can all benefit from this analysis.

### **Decision Making/Problem Solving**

- List criteria that you think should be considered before making a decision (i.e. costs, benefits, probability for success, short-term consequences, long-term consequences, possibility of unanticipated consequences, impact on those close to the problem, impact on others, alignment with policy and guidelines, etc.) Reflect on the last major decision you made. Rank it against the criteria you have listed. Consider whether another decision might have been more appropriate.
- Recall a situation in which you took responsibility for a decision and contrast this with a situation in which you did not take responsibility for a decision you made or delegated to someone else. Reflect on the consequences and the impact it had on relationships with others.
- Identify an issue requiring a decision. Then do the following: (1) Clarify information needed. (2) Identify sources of this information. (3) Collect the information. (4) Draw a conclusion based on the information gathered. (5) Ask your supervisor and/or mentor to review the information you have gathered and ask them what conclusions they would have drawn from the information. (6) Compare their conclusion with your conclusion.

- Review your options and decision criteria with experienced decision makers before finalizing a decision. Once a decision is made discuss with your supervisor or mentor how the decision should be implemented. Ask who should be involved in the implementation of the decision? How should they be involved?
- Discuss with your manager situations in which a decision was not made within the allotted time frame. What were the reasons for the tardiness? What impact did the tardiness have on the situation? What could be done to prevent this from occurring in the future?
- Note areas of your job in which you can make decisions independently without need for approval. Practice making decisions in these areas.
- Study literature to identify decision-making process models. Experiment with the models in low-risk situations.
- Identify sources of information that might be helpful in making recurring decisions.
- Review situations when you did not inform a key player in a decision that you made. What were the reasons for not informing that individual? What were the consequences of not involving that individual?
- Recall a time when you were not involved in a decision that affected you. Explore your reactions.
- Check with your supervisor for feedback on the adequacy and accuracy of information upon which you base your decision making.
- Ask your supervisor for examples of times when you made a decision that was not in your area of responsibility and times when you did not make a decision that you should have made because it was in your area of responsibility.
- Talk to others about the decision making process they favor on particular complex or high-impact issues.
- Keep a journal of routine problems. Note the problem, the date, the time of occurrence, consequences of not handling it immediately, and date and time the problem was resolved. Assess your journal entry every two weeks; ask your supervisor for feedback.

### **Delegating Responsibility**

- Request feedback from peers and direct reports regarding the skill and clarity of your delegation and the effectiveness of your follow-up procedures. Seek input to identify possible improvements or additions. Make appropriate behavior changes.
- Check for barriers to task accomplishment with the people working on the project; ask their advice as to how barriers might be eliminated.
- Volunteer to organize activities for community, charitable, cultural, or political organizations. Look for activities that encompass numerous tasks and provide delegation opportunities.

- Identify tasks you are currently doing that could enhance the skills of one or more individuals. Delegate the tasks to the appropriate people, while considering the characteristics of the tasks and the people's skills, knowledge, experience, and motivation.
- Seek project assignments that will require you to appropriately delegate a number of tasks for timely and successful project completion.
- Prepare an agenda or tickler file each week, recognizing and identifying appropriate tasks for delegation.
- Maintain a workload-distribution tracking chart to identify those staff members who can spend time on the delegated task or project.
- Meet with the appropriate individuals to define objectives and identify specific roles and responsibilities at the beginning of a project.
- Review previous projects to assess where more appropriate delegation might have led to a better outcome.
- Identify an assignment that you are unlikely to complete on your own and share all or a portion of the tasks.
- Maintain a log of previous delegations to identify those that have been productive and successful.
- Define parameters by establishing several "mini deadlines" over the course of a project when specific tasks must be completed.
- Set regular update meetings during the course of a project to review progress on assigned tasks and to ensure that objectives are being met.
- With the help of a manager, analyze an assignment that you delegated. Determine what was effective and what could have been done differently. Request coaching to identify how behaviors should be modified in the future.
- Involve direct reports and team members in development planning. Discuss opportunities where they could expand their knowledge and skills.

## Facilitating Change

- Try to imagine yourself in the situation of those people who will be affected by the change. What will their reactions be? What can you do to minimize their fear? Identify the benefits they are likely to enjoy the change. Find ways to communicate these benefits. Identify also what they are likely to lose because of the change and what they might worry about losing because of the change. Be clear about what they realistically can expect to gain and lose from the change.
- Formulate a simple and clear way to communicate the purpose and process of change. Develop a system for keeping others informed about the change. Periodically conduct informal surveys to determine what people "really believe" about the change.

Identify which perceptions, if any, need to be corrected. Ask them for ways the change can be made to be more bearable.

- List proposals for change that members of your staff have suggested in the past year. Reflect on your reactions to these proposals. Identify what happened to each of these proposals. Ask your staff how they feel about proposing changes to you. Ask them what you can do to encourage them to generate ideas for process improvements.
- Brainstorm with others to identify 10-15 things that could be done differently to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of your office. As a group, review the suggestions after the list has been developed. Select one of the ideas and use it as a test model for introducing change in your office.
- Review and assess your own reactions to past change. Evaluate what you did to successfully manage the change.
- Establish informal and formal ways to reward people for embracing change.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to describe your usual reaction to change.
- Request that your supervisor include you in committees and task forces considering and planning change.
- Explore with your supervisor how information about the change can be distributed to those who will be affected by the change.
- Express your own feelings about the change to your mentor or a trusted coworker. Understand that people experience a range of emotions when undergoing change. Allow them to help you manage these emotions in a productive way.

### **Guiding and Developing Staff**

- Review the developmental plan of each of your employees. Develop a list of the kinds of experiences and training each employee needs to grow. Use this list when assigning tasks in your office and approving training requests.
- If you do not already have a developmental plan of your own, create one. Identify the kinds of experiences and training you need for your own professional growth.
- Ask other managers how they track the performance of their employees. Identify best practices and incorporate them into your management practices.
- Ask your employees about the level of feedback you provide. Would they like more, less or about the same?
- Think about the feedback you have given in the last three months. Is feedback provided equitably to different individuals? Is the ratio of praise to criticism appropriate?
- Look for opportunities to reward employees for good performance. Catch coworkers doing things right.

- Jot notes about the feedback you plan to give an employee. Review the feedback to determine if it is specific and behavioral. Ask another manager to role play giving feedback. Ask them for feedback about how you give feedback.
- Read books about performance management, goal setting and coaching
- Ask a manager or coworker who is known for effective performance discussions to discuss his or her approaches and "secrets."
- Share the performance goals of your employees with your manager. Ask which are the strongest and which are the weakest. Ask your manager to identify what distinguishes the strong performance goals from the weak ones. Rewrite the weak ones.
- Have a manager or peer role-play, coach, rehearse, or practice with you before a performance discussion or appraisal.
- For a specific performance problem of one of your employees, describe the problem briefly and develop three alternative responses to the problem. Ask your manager to give you feedback on each of the alternatives.
- Identify the link between the performance goals of several of your employees and the overall goals of the organization. Ask your manager to describe the link as s/he sees it. Consider how each might inspire an employee.
- Ask your manager for ideas about how to reinforce the importance of the goals of the organization and the link between your office and the goals of the organization.
- Gather information about how the ways in which your organization suggests employees create developmental plans for individual employees. Look for samples of developmental plans. Determine what kind of support your human resources office can provide in the creation and implementation of development plans for individual employees.
- Review the performance goals of each of your employees. What is each employee expected to achieve, by when? Check with each employee. How do they describe their performance goals? How close is their description to your description? How clear have you been in articulating the performance goals of each of your employees? To what extent did employees participate in the development of these goals? Do they think the goals are reasonable?
- Rate each of your employees in terms of progress toward their performance goals. If you have trouble doing this, ask yourself the following questions: Does each employee have a set of clear and specific performance goals? Can progress toward the goals be measured? Do I know enough about what the employee is doing to determine if they are making progress toward their performance goals?
- Pay attention to non-verbal communication during performance discussions. Is the individual uncomfortable, nervous, motivated, inspired? Explore the reactions of people to the ways in which you give feedback. Pay attention to your own non-verbal communication in performance discussions.
- Make a list of performance problems in your group over the past three months. Identify what you did in response to each of these problems and in what time frame.



Rate the effectiveness of each of your responses in terms of the consequences for the individual, yourself, and others in your office. Identify from this review of data your strengths and weaknesses in managing performance problems.

- Ask each employee in the group to identify the key goals of the organization and to describe how they contribute to these goals. Based on their responses, think about how you can or should reinforce the goals of the organization and the link between their individual performance goals and the goals of the organization.
- Review the developmental plans of your employees with your manager. Ask your manager to select the best plan and tell you what makes it a good developmental plan. Ask your manager to select the weakest plan and tell you what makes it a weaker developmental plan. For one of the developmental plans, ask your manager to identify the kinds of work opportunities and training s/he would try to provide for the employee. Check it against what opportunities and training you have planned for the same employee.

### Initiative

- Select one of your work objectives that you find particularly interesting. Review your plans for achieving this objective. Now, consider what would be required to achieve this objective at a higher level or before you originally completed it. Design a plan for meeting this objective at a level that would "knock the socks off" others without considering the time, cost and energy required to implement the plan. (This purpose is to create the "ideal" plan.) Now, review the "ideal plan." Play devil's advocate and challenge the assumptions you hold about the possibility of fulfilling each element of the "ideal" plan. Ask someone else who is a positive person who regularly exceeds their performance objectives to review your "ideal" plan. Ask them to tell you what parts of the "ideal" plan might be possible to do. Incorporate whatever elements of your "ideal" plan into your actual plan. At the end of the plan, note how much success you had in achieving your objective. Think about your feeling of success and accomplishment.
- The next time you find yourself thinking or saying "it's not my job" add the following phrase, "but I'm going to do it anyway because that's the kind of person I am." Recall other times when you have gone above and beyond what was required of you and people expressed gratitude to you for your extra effort. Remember how you felt at those times. Reflect on the stories you might be telling yourself about how people will not appreciate your extra efforts in the current situation. Experiment with your predictions about how they will respond and give them the opportunity to prove you wrong.
- Have a frank conversation with your supervisor. Ask them for honest feedback about the amount of supervision they feel you need.. Ask if this is more or less than they feel others in your position need. Make two or three agreements about what you can do to alleviate their need to supervise you.
- The next time your supervisor assigns you a task prepare a plan of action for completing the task. Develop a schedule with milestones, statements of what you will accomplish by what time to make sure the task is completed by the deadline. Present

the plan to your supervisor and make agreements on your need to share the milestones with him/her.

- Seek opportunities to solve problems affecting your department that others might normally address.
- Look for reoccurring problems that have been ignored in the past and work on generating solutions. Set aside time to experiment with your ideas, record the results, and then share them with others.
- Discuss with your supervisor about the barriers (policies, bureaucracy, etc.) you encounter when trying to initiate action. Find ways to eliminate these barriers.

## Innovation

- Enroll in creative adult education courses (pottery, dance, writing, poetry, painting, etc.).
- Take courses not directly related to your field or personal style/approach. If you are logical and mathematical (left brain) take creative courses; if you are intuitive (right brain), take technical, scientific, or mathematical courses.
- Keep a list or note card file of new ideas, processes, and products you encounter, whether they are related to your job or not.
- Look for similarities between seemingly unrelated problems. Generate solutions that improve underlying issues.
- Gather information, techniques, and approaches from seemingly unrelated to disparate areas of disciplines.
- Write down ideas as they occur, even if you are in the middle of another task. Keep the list handy and refer to it when you have time to consider the ideas further.
- Identify barriers to innovation (barriers imposed by you, the department, the organization, or the "system") and seek ways to remove them.
- Observe how creative departments (advertising, TV studio, etc.) and people (artists, writers, actors, etc.) go about their work.
- Set aside "quite time" to generate solutions/improvements for current situations.
- Explore ways to perform your routine job responsibilities more effectively and efficiently. Request input and feedback from others (customers, coworkers, manager).
- Defer emotional commitment to a solution until after you have explored alternatives.
- Choose a noncritical situation to test a risky innovative idea.
- Expand your point of view by reading a book or journal not in your field or area of interest.
- "Schedule" creativity: Set aside time in meetings for sharing innovative ideas and solutions, participate in scheduled brainstorming sessions, etc.



- Talk to a variety of people when trying to develop solutions. Include people who are familiar with the situation as well as those who are not but who might be able to provide you with a unique idea or perspective.
- Interview people who have implemented successful and creative ideas, products, processes, etc. Ask them how they approached the situation, generated ideas, and selected the idea that was implemented. Analyze what made them successful.
- Ask people from different departments or disciplines how they address similar situations or problems.
- Ask internal and external customers about their needs and requirements; talk to "lost customers" to find out why they no longer use your products or services.
- Put together a team of people with whom you don't usually work to brainstorm some potential solutions to an existing problem.
- Look for ways in which you might inadvertently discourage others' ideas (e.g., not listening, criticizing ideas, playing one-upmanship). Seek feedback from others and work on eliminating these behaviors.
- Ask for feedback on your openness to new or different ideas. Solicit suggestions that could help develop your skills.
- Observe a work associate who is skilled in participating in or leading brainstorming or creative-thinking sessions.
- Afterward, ask the person to share "secrets" of creativity.
- Participate in a workshop designed to build creativity and innovation skills.

## Managing Work

- Schedule follow-up meetings at the completion of each project to determine whether acceptable time commitments and quality standards were met. Identify problem points in the process and determine what can be done to avoid these problems in the future.
- Volunteer to work on an assignment with another person who is a good planner and organizer. Ask for feedback on your methods.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to suggest systems that will help you track assignments to your staff. Investigate possible software programs that may assist you in this.
- Review the current distribution of tasks to your staff. Does the distribution reflect the best use of staff resources? Does the distribution reflect the needs of staff? Is the distribution equitable? Are you building a strong team with highly capable individuals who are motivated to complete the work you assign?
- Meet with your staff to discuss the current load of demands on your office. Provide a clear statement of the relative priority of tasks and the resources you estimate are needed for these tasks. Ask for their feedback on the accuracy of your estimates and

for suggestions on how this work could best be distributed among them. Use your team to help you plan and organize the demands on your office.

- When assigning work, commit to making clear statements about desired results, anticipated timelines, priority weighting on the tasks, required resources and established deadlines. Ask staff members to summarize these points and then help them develop an action plan for completing the work. Determine jointly when and how you will monitor progress on these action plans.
- Develop a resource usage chart to track assigned work, avoid overloads, and alert you to bottlenecks in the work process. Use the data in these charts to review the utilization of staff and resources. Determine where efficiencies might possible. Identify consistent problem points. Take action to resolve the problem points and leverage the opportunities for increased efficiency.
- With the assistance of a manager, analyze an assignment that was very effective or ineffective. Request coaching to pinpoint behaviors that should be modified or used in the future; set appropriate controls/follow-up systems that will eliminate ineffective procedures.
- As a basis for setting priorities, review values, vision and mission statements, as well as, organizational, departmental, and individual objectives. Discuss them with your manager. Ask for their input on the prioritization of current demands on your staff. When assigned work from your supervisor, clarify the relative priority of the tasks.
- After completing a major project, meet with your supervisor or mentor and review the ways in which you planned and organized the project. Request feedback on your planning and organizing skills. When a major project is assigned to your office, develop an action plan for completing the project and meet with your supervisor or mentor and ask for feedback on your plans. Be prepared to provide rationales for the time and resources you have estimated are necessary and the ways in which you distributed work among your staff members.

## Planning and Organizing

- Develop a list of opportunities for improving your organizational skills, and then, develop a plan for improvement.
- Discuss a “planning and organizing” improvement plan with your manager, and add it to your performance plan for the year.
- Assess your current organizational skills. Ask yourself the following questions: Do I take initiative to receive new assignments and complete current assignments? How committed am I to completing assignments on time? How often do I develop a schedule for myself that ensures I will complete tasks and not allow any tasks to fall off my plate? How often do I go to management for direction and assistance?
- Discuss your organizational skills with a manager or supervisor. During the discussion ask the manager or supervisor for feedback on the following: What is my level of initiative? What examples can you provide to help me understand your perception of my current level of initiative? What level of effort do you feel that I use to accomplish

assignments on time? What examples can you provide? What is my level of commitment to accomplishing assignments? What examples can you provide? What is my current ability to act with minimal supervision? What examples can you provide? What areas need improvement? What suggestions can be given to help me improve?

- Observe rhythms in your energy over the course of the day. Plan to work on complex tasks during times of the day when you are most energized. Schedule simple tasks for times when you are at energy ebbs.
- Ask those who have worked on a project with you to give you feedback about your use of time. Ask them for suggestions about how you can work more efficiently.
- Ask your supervisor to identify the priority of various assignments. Jointly identify decision rules for the priority of assignments.
- When assigned work, ask your supervisor or others to indicate the amount of time they estimate will be required to complete the assignment.
- When assigned work, ask specifically about the deadline for completing the work. Determine if the deadline is firm or can be negotiated in the event you need to revise your work schedule based on unexpected events.
- Ask your supervisor for suggestions about how to complete tasks in more efficient ways.
- For one week, keep a log of the way in which you spend your time. At the end of the week, review your log. Note points in which you became inefficient. Identify ways in which you can avoid these periods of inefficiency. Note the number of unexpected demands. Recognize that part of your work may involve responding to unexpected but critical demands. Rather than resenting these, acknowledge that you may need to plan time in your schedule for responding to these unexpected events.
- Use a calendar, task plan, a to-do list, work log, and similar planning tools to note events, action plans, deadlines, etc. Recognize that it might be necessary to develop schedules at various levels; a monthly, weekly and daily schedule. Develop an appreciation for leaving space in your schedule for unexpected events and delays.
- Ask others to share systems that they use for organizing work and systems that they use for filing documents. Develop a filing system that works for you. It should be one that minimizes the amount of time you spend retrieving documents and filing documents.
- Assess task, requests, and issues as they happen, determine if they will interfere with completing an important assignment, and act accordingly.
- Organize your use of the telephone and email. Make calls and respond to email early or late in the day in batches.
- Before retuning phone calls, determine how much time can be allocated to the phone call. Monitor your time on each call and note when conversations exceed the time limit you set. Find ways to close conversations tactfully.

- Respond to phone messages and emails in a timely manner, usually within 24 hours. Know that at the least you can acknowledge the message and inform the person when you can respond fully to the message.

### Quality Orientation

- Compose your own personal "commitment to quality" pledge. Keep it in a place where it is visible in your office to serve as a reminder to keep quality a top priority.
- Schedule time to check work before submitting it. Ensure that it is complete, accurate, well organized and reflects all current policies.
- Regularly communicate with other people who do similar work. How do they ensure quality outputs? Are their quality issues similar to yours, or are they different?
- Identify a coworker or supervisor who is recognized as a "quality conscious" person. Ask for advice about how to bring the same focus to your work.
- Develop a system for tracking changes in policies so that you can easily determine whether your work reflects the most current policies.
- Write down key steps to a complicated procedure. Put them in a visible place and refer to them whenever you need to use the procedure.
- Write or draw the key steps in a procedure that you feel could be streamlined or changed to produce fewer errors. Identify which steps could be changed, eliminated, added to streamline the procedure or reduce the number of errors in the outcome.
- Clarify criteria of quality for your work with your supervisor. Document these criteria and regularly assess your work against these criteria.
- Ask your supervisor or coworkers to explain the rationale behind procedures that seem a waste of time or that are complicated to perform. The urge to take shortcuts is often eliminated when giving an explanation.
- Review with your supervisor the possibility of developing a partnership with a coworker to do regular quality checks on each other's work. A fresh pair of eyes will sometime catch an error or defect that might have gone unnoticed.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to review your work and identify any problems with the quality of your work. Review the problems and identify why you had these problems. Determine what can be done to avoid these problems in the future. Employ your solutions and, after an appropriate amount of time, ask your supervisor or mentor to review your work again. Compare the number of problems from the second batch of work with the first batch of work. Note your progress.

## Safety Awareness

- Review safety training materials and guidelines periodically to refresh memory on safety concerns, tips and processes to avoid injury.
- Demonstrate or explain safety concerns with others who are not familiar with them.
- Identify safety concerns in your workplace that require attention. Think about ways to address them.
- Identify any procedures in your work that create safety concerns. Identify alternative procedures or changes in procedures that would reduce these concerns.
- Ask others to observe your actions and provide feedback on any safety concerns they observed.
- Ask your manager if s/he has any safety concerns that s/he has not expressed recently. Make a note of these concerns and address them.
- Take list of identified safety concerns to the individual in the organization who is responsible for workplace safety. Discuss with him or her ways that the safety concerns can be addressed and resolved.

## Strategic Focus

- Identify successful and unsuccessful strategies within your organization and investigate what went right and wrong with them.
- Review strategies from your organization's competition to determine why they were or were not effective.
- Test each new plan you develop against the vision. If these strategies or actions are successfully accomplished, how will they contribute to the vision? If one should fail, what are the consequences?
- If you are responsible for strategy development in your area, write out the plan or approach and test it with individuals who have been successful in similar areas.
- Use opportunities to try multiple approaches (e.g., aggressive vs. conservative) and test the assumptions of the approaches. This reinforces the fact that there is usually more than one way to accomplish something.
- Assume the client's perspective and ask yourself whether the strategy will ultimately meet the client's needs.
- Try alternative strategic planning models to determine how they fit your needs.
- Review case studies that outline how successful people have approached strategic planning.
- Develop best and worst case scenarios when you have opportunities to develop strategies and make a habit of considering them before implementation.

- Read strategic plans, business plans, and annual reports for your organization.
- Practice “stretch thinking” when considering alternatives. Try not to restrict yourself to the ways things have been done in the past. No one ever went wrong by considering all the alternatives (i.e., asking yourself and others, “What if . . .?”).
- Meet with people who have successfully put together and implemented a long-range goal or vision. Ask them questions to gain a better understanding of what was done.
- Involve team members early and often in the process of establishing long-range goals.
- When you establish a long-range goal, make a presentation to a safe audience instructing them to challenge your ideas and thinking.
- Use the sounding board concept by finding people who have successfully implemented long-range goals and bounce your ideas off them before selecting final strategies.
- Identify reliable information resources within your organization that you can count on during the early stages of gathering information.
- Work with your business partners to identify opportunities to review their strategic plans.
- Pursue opportunities to work with business partners as a team member to establish long-range goals.
- Look for opportunities to work with senior management during annual planning periods when there will be opportunities to make strategic decision.
- Ask your manager for a role in the strategic-planning process (or a similar process) that is conducted in your organization.
- Participate in start-up or new product development opportunities in which business partners will be involved in creating strategic plans.
- Volunteer to lead nonprofit fund-raising efforts.
- Become involved in political campaigns. They are one of the most challenging areas for short-term application of strategic planning skills.
- Apply strategic planning skills to your personal finances.
- Talk with people who have faced the challenge of meeting a long-term goal in their department or team. Ask them about their approach to encouraging and motivating others, how they reinforced the importance of meeting the goal, and any systems or processes that were helpful in meeting the goal.

## Stress Tolerance

- Experiment with different stress-reducing techniques, such as reading, exercising, listening to music, using aromatherapy, taking time out for yourself, etc.
- Find acceptable ways to reduce stress on the job, such as taking a walk, deep breathing, stretching, using mental images, etc.
- List the five most frequent stress-producing situations you face in your job. Rank these from most to least stressful. Think about ways to eliminate or cope with each situation.
- Ask your coworkers to tell you when they notice you becoming tense. Note the place, situation, time, and people involved. Look for trends and identify ways to react differently.
- Identify people who are known for their calmness and stability in stressful situations. Observe them and make notes of how they manage stress.
- Seek clarification from your manager on how you or your manager can, within your areas of responsibility and authority, eliminate or reduce the stress of unclear areas of responsibility or authority.
- Review situations in which your response to stress has had a negative impact on your performance. Reflect on these situations and determine what you could have done to respond more effectively. What might help you to engage in these responses? What might make it difficult for you to engage in these responses? Identify ways to remove the barriers to these responses and leverage any naturally occurring supports. Select a symbol or word that you can use to trigger these responses. Keep this symbol or word posted in your workplace and use it as a way to remind yourself of the responses you want to make in future stressful situations.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to help you identify ways or instances in which you respond negatively to stressful situations. Also ask them to identify times when you have responded effectively in stressful situations. Note the differences in your responses and the situations. Determine if there are stressful situations that you handle well. Explore what distinguishes the stressful situations you handle well from other stressful situations you in which you do not handle well. With the help of your manager or mentor, identify alternative behaviors that could produce more positive results in the situations you do not handle well.
- Identify two examples when you overreacted to a crisis situation with the help of your supervisor. Ask your supervisor to help you see each situation from a larger perspective. Recall what you worried might happen in each situation. Ask your supervisor to assess the likelihood of these outcomes. Explore what your reaction to these situations might have been if you had known this information at the time of the situation. Now, consider what actions you might have taken in the situation if you had this information at the time. Share these reactions with your supervisor and ask for additional feedback. What would they have liked to see you have done in these situations?



## Team Leadership

- Identify the supporters of and barriers to the organizational vision that are existing systems (selection, training, compensation/rewards, communication, performance management, etc.) and prepare action strategies.
- Incorporate organizational, departmental, and team goals into individual work expectations. For example, if an organizational goal is “100 percent customer satisfaction,” ask associates to be accountable for the same goal.
- Observe how others leaders develop successful teams. Think about the skills that you can learn from them.
- Think about the type of information that you share with your team members. Do you share too much? Not enough?
- How do you decide what to share?
- Create a description of what is expected from each position on the team and provide team members with a copy. If descriptions already exist, review them to make sure they are still accurate.
- Read business periodicals (for example, Business Week, Wall Street Journal, Fortune, Forbes, Inc., Harvard Business Review) and appropriate professional journals for articles about the newest team ideas.
- Identify people whose team leader skills you admire. Seek opportunities to work with them.
- Talk to other people who have recently moved or are in the process of moving to a team environment. Discuss approaches that worked well and those that might be improved.
- Consider alternative or nontraditional structures (partnerships, star points, or Self-directed teams) that might improve attaining organizational goals.
- Ask team members for ideas on ways to get them involved in team decisions. Talk about forming task forces to target specific situations.
- Confront conflict, problems, and others’ reservations or misgivings directly but tactfully. Get “all the cards on the table.”
- Hold regular meetings with your team to stay in touch with its projects. Offer to provide resources or talk to other team leaders to help your team reach its objectives.
- Talk with your team about how it is doing in relation to its and the organization’s goals and objectives.
- Seek assignments that involve increasing levels of leadership. Request feedback from others.
- Take on a project that will require you to establish goals and objectives that are inconsistent with organizational values.



- Join cross-functional, interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, or customer task forces or teams.
- Volunteer to serve as the coach for a sports team.
- Participate in local civic, charitable, and business groups and associations.
- Participate in a workshop designed to establish leadership skills, team building, and positive behavioral styles.
- Volunteer to be a leader for community, charitable, cultural, or political organization.
- Ask yourself what the "ideal" leader would do to encourage others to work together toward a common goal. After writing down your ideas, identify the things you need to work on most to meet the ideal. Commit yourself to practicing those behaviors when the next opportunity arises.
- Ask team members how well they feel you exemplify the values of the team. What things do you do that support the goals? What actions are inconsistent? After receiving your associates' input, work with your manager on developing a plan for building more supportive behaviors.
- Read customers' annual reports, advertisements, and publicity. Read industry and technical journals related to businesses that are an integral part of our organization's success. Read your organization's reports, advertisements, and publicity. Read local newspapers and business publications.
- Maintain a list of difficult business interactions, including the key contact, date, day of the week, time of day, a brief description of the problem, and how you handled it. Periodically review the list for patterns: Do you encounter more difficulties early in the day or week? Are the situations the same or similar? Are you developing routine solutions that might not satisfy particular needs?
- Ask questions that draw out the needs, interests, concerns, and objectives of other team members. Then do the following: (1) Paraphrase the responses of the other team members. This will show that you have listened and that you have an understanding of their perspective. (2) Discuss similarities in perspectives rather than focusing on differences. This will help you and other team members to realize that just because there are differences, it doesn't mean that there are no similarities in perspectives.
- Assess your level of commitment to the team, by asking yourself the following questions: Do you make it a point to attend all meetings, and be on time? Do you finish assigned tasks on time? Are you a contributor? Do you have a sense of team pride? Do you enjoy being part of a team? What actions do you take to help the team to achieve its goals?
- Keep a two-week log of your negative and positive behaviors as they relate to the team or team members. Then do the following: (1) Assess how many positive versus negative behaviors you engaged in. (2) Determine how you can increase the number of positive behaviors and decrease the number of negative behaviors. (3) Make a commitment and a plan for engaging in more positive behaviors.

- Obtain feedback from your manager or mentor on your teamwork skills and behaviors. Then do the following: (1) Ask this person to observe your actions and give you positive feedback and feedback for improvement. (2) Ask this person to give you his/her perceptions of when you have effectively demonstrated cooperation, collaboration, pride, and trust. (3) Ask this person what you can do to foster commitment in self and others, and how you can contribute to team spirit and team goals.
- Assess areas upon which you can improve your teamwork skills, meet with your manager to discuss these areas and your plan to start engaging in alternative and more positive behaviors. Track the consequences of these efforts.
- Identify your own needs, interests, concerns and objectives. Share these with other teams' members. Identify what kind of assistance and expertise you can offer to others in the team.

## Teamwork

- Ask other team members to give you feedback about these questions.
- Identify your own needs, interests, concerns and objectives. Share these with other teams' members. Identify what kind of assistance and expertise you can offer to others in the team.
- For each person in your team, identify what you see as his/her greatest contribution to date. Develop a way to recognize each person for what they have contributed.
- Assess areas upon which you can improve your teamwork skills, meet with your manager to discuss these areas and your plan to start engaging in alternative and more positive behaviors. Track the consequences of these efforts.
- Ask questions that draw out the needs, interests, concerns, and objectives of other team members. Then do the following: (1) Paraphrase the responses of the other team members. This will show that you have listened and that you have an understanding of their perspective. (2) Discuss similarities in perspectives rather than focusing on differences. This will help you and other team members to realize that just because there are differences, it doesn't mean that there are no similarities in perspectives.
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### Technical/Professional Knowledge and Skills

- Track the amount of time you spend asking coworkers for information about updates regarding policies and procedures and/or technical information that you should know. Double this to account for the time spent by co-workers answering your questions. Now, consider the amount of time it would take you to track this information yourself.
- Schedule time to experiment with skills and knowledge you gain from either formal or informal training as close to the time of the training as possible. Practice the new skills until you are comfortable with them. Do not wait to practice and become comfortable with them.
- Ask the people to whom you go for information about updates on policies and procedures to explain how they track and organize this information. Implement similar systems for yourself.
- Build a network of professionals in your organization who meet on a regular basis to discuss developments in your profession and to share thoughts and experiences of applying these new developments.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of creating a central file for information about updates to policies and procedures that can be shared by all who need access to this information.
- Provide your manager with information about developments in your professional field and identify the pros and cons of incorporating these developments in your work.
- Explore with your manager the possibility of creating a series of meetings for professionals within the organization to share information and experiences with new developments in your area of expertise.
- Before starting a new project, task or assignment, ask yourself the following questions: What have I learned recently that will help me complete this project, task or assignment? What new information has been made available to me that pertains to this project, task or assignment? How can I complete this project, task or assignment efficiently? What can I share with others about the results of completing the project, task or assignment that will help my department to better and more efficiently complete work?
- Subscribe to a professional journal in your field or join a professional association. Ask other professionals in your field to suggest journals and associations which they would recommend. Go to a library or the web and identify journals or websites maintained by professional associations in your field to determine what new

developments are occurring in your profession. Expand your personal network of connections with professional in your field. Include professionals in other organizations to learn about what developments are occurring in your field and to share your own developments.

- Find peers who display a high level of technical knowledge and skill. Then do the following: (1) Talk with them about your desire to improve your technical knowledge and skill. (2) Ask them how they improve their technical knowledge and skill. (3) Ask them to provide you with feedback on your use of technical knowledge and skill. (4) Ask them to keep you informed of publications, training programs, books, etc. that might help to increase your technical knowledge and skill.
- After attending a training program or seminar, review the key information, actions and behaviors. Then do the following: (1) Develop an action plan to perform or implement the key information, actions and behaviors learned during the training. (2) Describe how you, your department, your organization and your customers will benefit from your action plan. (3) Discuss your action plan with your manager or supervisor. (4) Consider making your action plan part of your Performance Plan for the year.

### **Visionary Leadership**

- Whenever your organization announces a business decision or places special emphasis on an organizational goal, analyze how it fits into the overall business strategy and how it will affect your area. Make sure that decisions in your area mirror the decisions of your organization.
- Identify those elements in existing systems that support and inhibit the organizational vision (selection, training, compensation/rewards, communication, performance management, etc.) and prepare action strategies to address them appropriately. When addressing inhibitors or problems, make sure you are working with the sources of problems and not their symptoms.
- Identify a project in which the work procedures followed were not consistent with organizational systems. Compare this to a project where procedures and systems were consistent, analyzing the differences both in terms of commitment to the project and project outputs.
- Review the latest business plan you wrote for your team or department. Did you include a section on how your plan ties into long-term major goals? Ask yourself how the plan could be improved and what you have to do as a leader to create a sense of direction for long-term goals.
- Read documents and/or attend meetings concerning strategic plans, business plans, and annual reports for your organization. Point out to others how organizational vision and values apply to everyday contexts.
- Reinforce organizational, departmental, and team goals and business plans to your team by incorporating them into work expectations. Make sure that everyone's key objectives reflect a contribution toward organizational goals.

- Analyze the operational and communications problems your work group encounters. Could those problems be solved by an interdepartmental task force looking at broader issues and long-range solutions? If so, take the initiative to form that group.
- Talk with people who have faced the challenge of meeting a long-term strategic goal in their department or team.
- Ask them how they went about encouraging and motivating others and how they reinforced the importance of meeting the goal. See if any of the systems or processes they found helpful could be incorporated into your team.
- Write down what you believe are the goals and objectives of your department. Ask your leader to review your list and then discuss how your goals can be better tied to organizational vision and values.
- Seek feedback from others on what they perceive to be your department's top priorities and short- and long-term goals.
- What are the differences in perception between their statements and your (or your organization's) actual goals?
- Identify an activity or process that does not align well with the organizational vision and values. Set up and implement a plan for realigning the process so that it no longer conflicts.
- Meet with your team members and ask them to provide feedback concerning how well you communicate and exemplify the values of your organization. What things do you do that support or inhibit the vision? Ask team members what you can do to gain their enthusiasm and commitment to reaching organizational or department goals.
- Set up a trial run by deciding on one thing you and your team would like to accomplish by the end of the month (for example, high customer satisfaction ratings for the month). Communicate this "vision" to your team and make sure they have the resources to make it happen. Afterward, discuss the trial run with your team and figure out ways to improve the goal-setting process and to make it on-going.
- Ask to observe or participate in a project team or task force that targets broader-range organizational issues (especially those that involve senior management participation). Use the experience as an opportunity to gain insight into establishing vision and values.

## Work Standards

- Compose your own personal "commitment to quality" pledge. Keep it in a place where it is visible in your office to serve as a reminder to keep quality a top priority.
- Schedule time to check work before submitting it. Ensure that it is complete, accurate, well organized and reflects all current policies.
- Regularly communicate with other people who do similar work. How do they ensure quality outputs? Are their quality issues similar to yours, or are they different?

- Identify a coworker or supervisor who is recognized as a "quality conscious" person. Ask for advice about how to bring the same focus to your work.
- Develop a system for tracking changes in policies so that you can easily determine whether your work reflects the most current policies.
- Write down key steps to a complicated procedure. Put them in a visible place and refer to them whenever you need to use the procedure.
- Write or draw the key steps in a procedure that you feel could be streamlined or changed to produce fewer errors. Identify which steps could be changed, eliminated, added to streamline the procedure or reduce the number of errors in the outcome.
- Clarify criteria of quality for your work with you supervisor. Document these criteria and regularly assess your work against these criteria.
- Ask your supervisor or coworkers to explain the rationale behind procedures that seem a waste of time or that are complicated to perform. The urge to take shortcuts is often eliminated when giving an explanation.
- Review with your supervisor the possibility of developing a partnership with a coworker to do regular quality checks on each other's work. A fresh pair of eyes will sometime catch an error or defect that might have gone unnoticed.
- Ask your supervisor or mentor to review your work and identify any problems with the quality of your work. Review the problems and identify why you had these problems. Determine what can be done to avoid these problems in the future. Employ your solutions and, after an appropriate amount of time, ask your supervisor or mentor to review your work again. Compare the number of problems from the second batch of work with the first batch of work. Note your progress.

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## Appendix C – Further Reading

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U.S. Office of Personnel Management. HCAAF Resource Center.

[www.opm.gov/hcaaf\\_resource\\_center/assets/sa\\_wp\\_kepi.pdf](http://www.opm.gov/hcaaf_resource_center/assets/sa_wp_kepi.pdf)